

A Whisper, A Blade, A Feather & A Fiend

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by [BestGreenist](#)

Summary

Tommy doesn't remember much from his childhood other than he somehow ended up working for Puffy who offered him a place to stay. He met Tubbo sometime after and moved in with the hybrid, working during the day and kicking ass at night, even if some of the gadgets given to him were on the more questionable side of 'I know this is already illegal but this *feels* illegal'.

So of course a sleep-deprived man enters the cafe on a day Tommy happens to be at the counter.

or

“You good man?” Tommy questioned, not sure if the man in front of him was also on something else or just extremely exhausted.

“Yeah, sorry, just had a long night,” the man in question replied, whose eyes were brown and mixed with hints of swirling misty white, “can I get a latte with five shots of caffeine please?”

“What the fuck man, just do cocaine,” Tommy muttered in surprise, which the man managed to catch, a small smile forming on his face as he exhaled.

or

A vigilante AU my brain thought up after reading too many SBI fanfics.

Author's Note: This book is currently on hiatus as I finish more chapters.

- Inspired by [TommyInnit's unbeatable method of avoiding sudden death](#) by [eneliii](#)
- Inspired by [Hold my hand tight \(we'll make it another night\)](#) by [grasstastic](#)

Prologue: He Who Fell to Grace

Chapter Summary

Everyone's young once.
And not to long ago he wasn't able to fly.

Chapter Notes

- I tried to convey Tommy's age in this chapter, not sure how well I did but if you're wondering why this kid says 'pog' so much that's why.

General Note: Most tags are for later chapters and things I have planned <3

TW: Violence, Mentions of blood

The last thing he remembered was the fall, the tumble from somewhere he could no longer place. He skidded across the rough ground, over the worn away and chipped cement. Fresh grazes littered his appearance, noticeable by the brighter shades of red that painted the ground of the dingy alleyway he'd found himself in. He forced himself to stand, ignoring the ache in his knees, his body screeched in protest but his mind screamed danger.

Get out of here.

So, he did.

Or at least he tried too.

One of his knees, covered in a fresh injury collapsed underneath him, he cursed as he tripped and landed again on the alleyway ground. He vaguely wondered if this could be worse.

A rustle of garbage alerted him to another presence, oh my Philza it *could* be worse.

He opened his eyes as something got closer, a gruff voice spoke unrecognisable words, a smirk present in his voice. *Where was he again?*

Oh, dingy alleyway covered in blood, *did that mean he passed out?* Pog.

He felt a boot press down on his stomach, not pog.

“Aren’t so snappy, ar’ ya now kid?”

He tried to scream; he wasn’t going to die here, he couldn’t. He was the amazing Tommy! Brave, strong and *very* smart, he couldn’t die to a pathetic criminal in a suspicious alleyway.

He winced as he felt something crack, a searing pain clouded his already blurry vision, he flailed around on the ground kicking the criminal in the legs with a satisfying smack. Apparently not a great idea, the man standing over him raised his foot before striking him in the side, slamming his back against a dumpster.

Ok, maybe he *was* going to die here.

But then a miracle happened, a flutter of feathers that he could recognise from almost anywhere.

Philza. Philza was here.

Philza would save him, he wasn't the number three hero for no reason.

The gruff voice faded from his ears, Philza did it! He defeated the bad guy! Philza's so pog.

He felt warm, strong arms underneath him as he lay semi-conscious, eyes shut from the pain reverberating around his body.

“Please be okay, mate.”

Tommy felt his conscious stir at the sound of an argument, he couldn't make out many of the words, but it did sound like an argument to him. Although it wasn't as heated as his previous home- no it never was home- house's arguments, a women sounded defeated while someone spoke softly to her, almost pleading her for something he couldn't hear.

The women let out a sigh, “alright, but not like that.”

Not like what? What were they talking about?

“What do you mean?”

Yeah, what did she mean?

“He no longer walks among them; it should be appropriate that it stays that way.”

Who no longer walks among who?

“What are you suggesting?”

“...”

“You want him to be like me?”

“Eventually... yes, but for now, he's just a boy.”

“...alright, let me know when you do?”

“Of course, dear.”

Tommy awoke on a roof, his eyes weren't blurry and his body no longer hurt, but he felt heavy. Shifting around he noticed why, wings. He had wings. That was absolute poggers.

But he still didn't know where he was and that was not pretty pogchamp if he did say so himself.

Chapter 1: Doing The World A Favour

Chapter Summary

Just an average day in the life of Tommyinnit, getting harassed by your roommates, preventing crime and throwing your other roommate off a balcony-

Chapter Notes

- Not my favourite chapter I've prewritten but *sketchy dudes are sketchy*.

TW: Minor Violence, Guns

“RANBOO DID YOU TAKE ALL OF THE CEREAL AGAIN?”

“For the love of Philza and all things Minecraft could you shut the fuck up?” Tommy whisper yelled into the headset microphone that he was highly debating whether to turn off or not.

“You don’t understand, he keeps putting them on the top selves with his lanky arms, *WHERE I CAN’T REACH*” Tommy subconsciously reached up to cover his ears, the feathers behind them flattening as Tubbo ended with a very directed screech at the duel-toned boy Tommy knew was standing in the same room, entering at Tubbo’s first beckoned call.

“Look, while I’d love to help throw the tall bitchboy out a window I’ve got something I currently need to focus on and either you can help me not perish or I’m turning this thing off.”

“Don’t you dare, I’m so helpful,” came the protest through the headset although his volume was notably quieter with a semblance of collection to it.

Tommy sighed in audible relief, not that he’d ever admit aloud he was glad Tubbo was on his side and not against.

“Sketchy dude at 12 o’clock.”

Tommy bit back a remark at the time, instead choosing to scan the darkness that unfolded below him. He was sitting on the edge of a shattered window, the building long abandoned due to a probable fire if the blackened frame was anything to go by. His wings gently rested on the floor behind him, covering the tips of his feathers in a mix of ash, dust and whatever else found its way up onto this floor. Tommy didn’t mind the mess, his wings were striped anyway, the dark black stripe at the bottom just looked more pog if he’d say so himself. Tubbo often referred to him as a racoon, whether it was from his wing patterns or the fact he commonly found himself in dumpsters, he wasn’t so sure.

Looking through the shadows offered by the surrounding buildings was easier for him than most, due to his enhanced night vision he attributed to his pogness, oh and the fact he probably had owl or something powers, y’know, hence the epic wings. He spotted sketchy man number one lurking

around one of the corners, far too dressed up in a suit and tie for the area he currently found himself in.

“Target spotted, any information yet?”

“Pico spotted only four heat signatures so I presume it’s two bodyguards with the dealer and the man you’ve been following, beware of guns but there shouldn’t be any ambushes unless there’s another ability at work. Keep watch for strays as always though.”

“Why did you have to call that *thing* Pico?”

“Hey, don’t call it a thing! It’s my prized child!”

“It’s just a drone disguised as a bird; it doesn’t even have any feathers!”

“So? They look nice with metal feathers.”

“It’s such a poor excuse for a bird compared to my magnificence.”

“You sound jealous.”

“Of a piece of metal? Never.”

The faint comment of “How is he not dead?” reached his ears through the receiver.

“Oh, he’s *so* dead when I get back.” Tommy grumbled.

“Glad you’re with me!” Tubbo cheered and Tommy could faintly hear clapping echoing into Tubbo’s microphone.

“*Hey! I’m right here!*” Ranboo protested to the planned murder on behalf of himself.

“That just makes it easier to grab you.” Tubbo quipped back.

Tommy quietly laughed at his friends as he watched from the window of the questionably standing building, the man was still in sight and two of the people Tubbo had warned him about were in his line of sight. Another man, again in a horrendously out of place suit held a briefcase of some sort that only promised classic villain activities. Like seriously, who wears a suit and carries a briefcase in the middle of some burnt down and clearly abandoned area.

But one of them wasn’t visible, however, there were a few potential spaces to hide a few metres away from the group or some perches higher up. Which would probably be the more viable option. Tommy rose from his crouched surveillance, his wings rising with him before he tilted forward and glided to another perch, directly above the men but still high enough to look for the person who was unaccounted for. Scanning the building windows across from him he caught glimpse of white fabric as it peeked out of the grey coat the man was wearing. He was obviously impatient, not gonna lie Tommy would be too but *damn man you’re really giving yourself away*.

Now all he had to do was wait for the perfect time to strike, preferably before the sun rose at the pace these guys were taking.

“The money first,” the briefcase guy said like every drug villain ever that was about to commit a scam.

“Ah, I believe we agreed upon different terms prior? No? I was promised collection of items prior to exchanging any corporate funds.”

“Hey Tubs, any corrupt businesses on your hit list recently?”

“Yeah a few, any noticeable symbols? Tattoos if they’re really sketchy. Some indicator of rank?”

Tommy’s gaze observed the man who was making the demands, at least that explained the suit. An unsatisfying fold of the white undershirt revealed a convenient pattern of tattoos that covered his neck a series of arrows and circles accompanied by the occasional snake.

“Snakes and ladders?”

“*Ladders?*”

“Arrows and some circle shit, yeah why?”

“Mm, I’ll keep that in mind, any opportunities yet?”

“There’s about to be if that guy keeps making demands.”

As soon as he said it a gun was drawn by the sole man, the one he’d followed from afar since the main intersection (where he’d followed some rando as a joke, but damn he didn’t think it was a joke anymore). Almost immediately the guy who was ‘bodyguarding’ the one with the briefcase brought out a weapon in retaliation.

Go time.

Leaping from his perch he dived down from the opposite direction the so-called sniper was facing, landing impressively silent behind him before he brought out one of his batons from its holster and slammed it down on the gun’s stand before twirling another from his side and landing a hit on the man’s head. There wasn’t any struggle, but the gun smashing had alerted the men to something.

“What? Did you get someone else up there waiting? Too scared to handle your own affairs?” the man with the snakes and ladders game tattooed to his neck sneered. Obviously, he was either impeccably vain and had no self-preservation skills (like Tommy, although not the former, he was amazing he’d admit but he wasn’t vain), or he was backed into a corner and was progressing into feral animal mode. Which had the possibility to become a problem. Unfortunately, it’d probably be Tommy’s problem.

“Are you good, Big man?”

Tubbo’s voice startled him, almost knocking stray rubble off the window as he watched the trio beneath him.

“Yeah, took out their sniper, two guns, one hasn’t drawn a weapon yet but the snaky one looks like he’s getting desperate.”

He heard Tubbo’s noise of thought through the headset, “it’s a full moon tonight is it not?”

Tommy squinted his eyes, “and that’s relevant because..?”

“No clouds in your area I presume? Their meeting, in the open, only surrounded by abandoned buildings with broken windows?”

“Are you on something right now? I don’t understand how that’s relevant-” Tommy cut himself off, “You’re a genius.”

“I know.”

Tommy took a moment to process his plan, the moon was basically directly overhead, it was about 11:45 so he could either wait for it to be perfect and risk the entire mission or go now. Yeah, he was going now, he took a step back from the ledge before lunging forward and into the open sky, extending his wings to their full length as he glided across, a shadow crossing over the clearing. Zipping directly above the deal before back into a window opposite to his previous position, the rubble tumbling to the ground from his prior location. He held back a laugh from both the absurdity of Tubbo's plan (like seriously, this is what the literal studying try-hard came up with?) and the confused glances the men shot to their surroundings.

“What was that?”

Tommy waited for them to look accusingly at the other party before flying over again albeit quicker. Whizzing past in a blur while going down one floor each time.

5

“WHO’S THERE?” the tattooed man yelled into the sky, he did look rather childish doing so.

“I know you’re behind this, trying to scam my boss of his funds.”

Tommy flew over again.

4

The snaky man raised his gun at the briefcase guy threateningly, “stop this at once.”

His bodyguard acted, shooting at the offender’s arm causing him to drop the gun while the briefcase guy watched coldly, with a slight expression of hidden confusion.

Tommy leapt again, feeling oddly like a swooping bird.

3

Tommy waited, wings flared as the bodyguard shot again at the man’s leg and he in return shot towards the bodyguard’s torso.

2

He was only two floors away from ground level, the briefcase guy was surveying the upper levels while the two in front of him brawled. *Your sniper is out bitch, you’ve just got me to deal with.*

He dove again, this time landing behind the men, in perfect position outside of their eyeliner.

1

Tommy struck.

Springing forward he knocked over the dealer with the briefcase, landing squarely on his back, his batons now connected into a longer bo-staff raised above his head as the pair stopped fighting before him.

“Surprise bitches.”

Tommy pushed forward, staff hitting the bodyguard’s shoulder with a crack before they stumbled and tried to aim at him. *Uh, no thanks,* he’d prefer to not be shot tonight. Whipping the staff around he caught his opponent’s hand knocking the firearm from his hand before jabbing them in the

stomach with his staff. He watched as they crumpled to the ground in his peripheral vision, turning his main attention to the snake tattoo guy who was backing away from him. Damn, he's so amazing even villains don't want to fight him.

Tommy snapped forward, lunging at the guy's outstretched arm that was attempting to aim the gun he used before. Again, what was with these guys? Couldn't they see he'd prefer *not* to be shot? Twisting the guy's arm behind his back he pulled a nifty twist-tie from his pocket with his spare hand and pulled his attacker's wrists together with it. Securing him in place and- oh he heard movement, that's not ideal.

The first guy Tommy took out (briefcase dude) was up with a look that said he had murder on his mind, his veins glowed a vibrant red that slowly increased in intensity. That wasn't very pog.

"You little cockroach, how rude of you to interrupt, I'm going to rip you apart with your own body, starting with your arteries."

"What the fuck is an artery."

"...are you being serious, you're asking that as I prepare to kill you?"

"I mean yeah, need to die informed man."

"Uh, they're like, veins, they carry blood around your body."

"Ah cool, thanks for that, so uh, you gonna try and kill me now or..?"

The man tensed his arm and glared at Tommy; Tommy blinked back.

A wave of shock crossed the man before he schooled his features, "guess plan B will have to do it."

The red faded from his arms as the man lunged at him, briefcase sitting on the floor and in his hand was now a dagger. Coming at him at an uncomfortable speed. Tommy swivelled on his foot, turning sideways as the man lunged past him, he grabbed their shoulder along with the arm that held the knife and *pulled*. The briefcase guy let out a grunt as the weapon was yanked from his grasp and his momentum was used to push him to the ground. Tommy kneeled, one knee pinned his arm down on his back as he searched for another zip tie, finding one he pulled the man's hands together and kicked the weapon away from him into the buildings charred rubble.

"This place is done, I should be back in 30, just gonna round them up, Big T."

"Nice work, Big man."

Tommy pulled his bandana that covered his mouth further up; it didn't slip too far during his most certainly graceful descent but he'd rather not inhale any dust. Or give away his identity, that too. Kicking off the ground he ascended to the floor he'd left the rather unhidden sniper, hoisting their limp form off the ground by the cuff of their undershirt he deposited him on the ground before collecting all discarded weapons. The guns were pretty normal, rather common and definitely nothing he hadn't seen before. He took pleasure in deconstructing them with his black gloves (no way in hell was he putting his fingerprints on them, he's not that stupid) and placing them in his backpack.

He walked over to the dagger although upon further inspection of the item it caught his interest, the design was intricate and it looked possible to build a liquid compartment into it. He could probably ask Tubbo if he could build a paralysing agent into it, that'd be so pog to use. He tucked that one

into the side of his backpack that was separate from his gun haul before swiping the briefcase from the floor and unlocking it with a satisfying *click*.

Ah, so Tubbo was right, this was definitely a drug deal.

He reached the local police station quicker than he thought he would, and definitely without any of the usual hitches such as dropping his bag, losing his headset and *oh my Philza is that Philza?* Tommy practically dropped out of the sky, for very good reason he might add, Philza could see him- *oh my god Philza could see him- he's so cool-* ok, Tommy, focus. He ducked behind a building's weird chimney looking thing and tucked his wings closer to himself, the feathers at the tips of his ears excitedly puffed up despite his protest at lying low.

He watched as Philza brought out a vial of glowing liquid, something that looked awfully similar to the glowy magic looking powder that was contained in the briefcase he was holding. Philza handed it to the police member he was talking with before the officer pulled out a notepad and wrote down some information, thanking Philza then pulling out what looked to be a peanut, offering it to the crow that was happily sitting on the hero's shoulder.

Shit, that feels like a regular occurrence.

If the calm manner the crow plucked the nut from his hand was anything to go by and *oh shit he has crows, Philza probably knows where he is.*

Alright, time to not get arrested.

Tommy waited, quietly (which was a rarity in itself) for Philza to leave and only when the pro hero turned to fly away did he let out a breath of relief, that was until his headset crackled into life again, “oi, where are you?”

“Tubbo not right now or I’m shutting this thing down,” which honestly, would probably be the best decision he’s made all day.

Tubbo didn’t reply, apparently getting the message for once- or maybe he beat him to shutting the device down out of spite. But whatever it was he watched Philza instead, watching as the hero looked around, *and shit he's looking this way, act natural.* So he stayed behind whatever thing he was behind and hoped it covered his wings too. When he peeked over he briefly caught a two-fingered signal Philza sent to the crow on his shoulder.

Oh thank Philza, he's going.

He stayed behind the chunk of cement for a few extra minutes staring as his idol’s figure faded into the night sky with specks of black following him from random points in the sky.

He finally stepped out from his hiding spot, landing softly in front of the police station with his mask securely on his face and briefcase at his side. He shot his signature finger guns to the receptionist before tugging the straps of his backpack off and sifting through the artillery parts, he deposited them in front of the automatic glass doors along with the briefcase as the receptionist called for two officers to collect his usual *generous donations.* He rezipped his bag, contents sitting on the ground as he stepped back and let the officers pick them up. While he didn’t think they’d try and arrest him on the spot he could never be sure and it was best to keep his distance. A caw of a bird echoed around the building as he waited for them to bring the items inside, shuffling from foot to foot in a sort of half nervous, half restless and half- *oh you can't have three halves-* wanting to

get himself in the air again.

One walked back inside with the deconstructed weapons while the other gasped at the contents of the case, a muttered thank you was given as they turned, quickly calling for a chemical test to be arranged on the contents.

A small smile crossed his face, though it was unseen to the rest of the world.

Tommy arrived home later than he'd anticipated but he also hadn't expected to encounter *the Philza*, Crow Father extraordinaire on his way home either. He landed without a noise of impact (thanks to his wings) on their shared apartment balcony, well it was technically Tubbo's not that he'd ever say it out loud, Tommy was more like a racoon than he wanted to admit.

Tommy pushed open the glass door, which he'd left unlocked upon leaving earlier that night. Tubbo rounded the corner as he slid the door shut, a mug of dark steaming liquid in his hand as he tiredly sipped on it.

“You wanna do the world a favour?”

“Depends, what do I get in return?”

“What do you want?”

Tommy placed his bag on the table next to the balcony door, taking out the intricate dagger and placing it next to a photo of the three of them sitting on a bench in one of the local parks. Tubbo raised an eyebrow at the item, though interest sparked in his eyes, along with the usual crazed ‘I want to commit a felony and it might be murder’ look.

“Recon you could fit this with a paralysing agent?”

“Deal.”

“Poggers,” Tommy grinned as he offered the handle towards Tubbo who took it gently, turning the sharp item over in his palm before a wicked grin found its way onto his face.

“This is going to be so cool,” Tubbo’s eyes sparkled with their usual chaotic energy.

“Now,” Tubbo’s gaze snapped to his own, “help me throw the offence of legs out the window.”

Tommy returned his grin before walking off into the rest of the house calling out as he did so, “I would’ve done it free of charge anyway.”

A screech echoed through the walls of the house as Tubbo sipped his liquid creativity, *so what if it was his sixth cup of coffee that night*. Tommy returned to where Tubbo was waiting, dragging the dual-toned boy by his legs as he desperately tried to cling to the carpet to no avail.

“Alright, bitchboy, out you go,” Tommy cheered as Tubbo pushed open the glass door and Tommy swung the poor teenager out of the balcony door. A strangled noise escaped the boy as he flailed mid-air before free-falling off the side of the building. The pair watched as he fell, waiting for the *vwoop* that signalled the arrival of their flatmate.

Ranboo appeared behind them, his dual hair fluffed up randomly, his eyes blown wide and a

shower of purple particles around him as he grasped onto the railing while Tubbo cackled at his misfortunes.

“You two,” he huffed between breaths, pointing at the pair who were now both laughing at him, “are the devil incarnated I swear.”

Tommy hummed to himself as he repacked his gear, walking around the scattered clothes in the shared bedroom. Well, they could always move the pop-out couch to another room and have this bedroom only contain the bunk beds but it was always preferred this way. They all shared comfort in one another as they lounged in their sleeping positions. Tommy had dibs the pop-out tonight and as always Ranboo had been stuck with the bottom bunk, better hitting his head than being subjected to Tubbo’s chaotic wrath.

Ranboo had already knocked himself out, one of his legs not even on the bed and a pillow thrown haphazardly across his face. Tubbo’s hand spilled out of the top bunk while his other held tightly onto one of his newest gadgets he probably had half-finished. Pico, the metal bird Tommy swore Tubbo had too much of an emotional connection to sat on the bedside table, plugged into one of the charging ports.

Tommy exhaled before letting himself fall into the welcoming embrace the mattress of the pop-out couch offered, his wings splayed out underneath him as he stared blearily at the ceiling, vaguely recounting tonight’s activities. His eyes slipped shut, contentment settling on his features as his consciousness was whisked away to the land of endless possibilities.

Tonight was good,
but as always, tomorrow could be better.

Chapter 2: A Whisper of the Past

Chapter Summary

The Rioter meets Phantom, someone who should probably arrest him but most likely won't.

Chapter Notes

- I love choosing a vigilante AU when I *love* writing fight scenes (please heavily note the sarcasm).
- I think I accidentally incorporated the word pog into my vocabulary, I can't stop saying it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was yet another painfully boring shopping trip, one that he'd been forced to go on because it was 'his turn to do the groceries', as if. He swore Tubbo hadn't gone in the past *month*, but no Tommy has to go because he values his gear working correctly when he's trying not to die during his missions and nightly outings. If he hadn't been blessed (or cursed depending on the situation) with the ability to make his wings disappear so that he could fit them under his plainer jumpers (which Tubbo thought was funny to buy ones with wing designs on the back even though hiding them left a wing tattoo on his back), unlike his red and white signature hoodie that was woven with fancy fabric which's name he swore had shield in it.

(Tubbo had said something about it being used in bulletproof vests and vehicle armour along with the occasional pro if they were going for something more practical than eye-catching. So most likely a few of the top heroes used it but not all, some of the heros' choices are... questionable).

Point was, he had to tone down some of his signature identifiers because while it was pog to be recognised it was not very poggers to have the police on him 24/7. Or some sketchy dude following him to his joint apartment and while he'd like to point out that following him unnoticed would be hard, he still slips up occasionally. Though the small number of feathers at the tips of and behind his ears couldn't be helped (hence the hiding of them behind his hood at night).

As he was waiting in line for his turn at the self-serve checkouts, he glanced out the window, purely out of boredom. Conveniently, some type of fancy car pulled into a dead-end street across from the supermarket, a woman dressed in a red gown stepped out along with two other men in suits. The car reversed before turning and exiting the street, leaving the three outside of a glowing building with a bouncer standing outside in front of a red roped entrance.

He was about to mentally comment on the earliness of their club visit before he noticed three things. One, it was actually around 4:00 pm so it could be likely they were hosts for some type of function that they had to set up. Two, the woman didn't head towards the neon lights of the club, instead, she seemed to turn and lead the others into a far more toned down storefront which didn't match their over the top elegant vibe at all. Oh, and three, it was his turn at the checkout.

Tommy watched as the glowing wisps of *something* stood on a building far from him but still in range of the strange light it was emitting that admittedly wasn't all that bright. Even if he was still a few dozen buildings away from it and unable to identify its shape. Totally safe and a good idea to follow it, c'mon this was *the* Rioteer all of his ideas were amazingly thought through.

He stepped back on the building ledge he was on before pushing himself off as his wings unfurled behind him, sending him skimming past all of the lower buildings and trickily weaving between some of the higher parts where antennas and the occasional satellite dish sat just wanting to be crashed into. As he got closer to the wispy thing he noticed it had more of a blue hue to it than a straight-up white glow, its main body seemed to be blue with white on its legs and head but Tommy couldn't exactly make out what it was just yet. Landing on the edge of another building he peered down at the shape only a few buildings away from him, it was an animal, or it appeared to look like one if you removed the glowy-wispy bits that reminded him of some sort of ghost. He jumped forward onto the roof next to him and walked closer, the little animal blinked at him then glanced forward again and hopped a few paces forward before looking back at him. *Did it want him to follow it?*

Well, all of his ideas *were* amazingly thought out, so he decided to go with it, half jumping across the buildings and half using his wings to catch small drafts to make harder jumps. His free running wasn't half bad if he did say so himself. The animal, which he could now determine was a blue sheep had slowed its pace, allowing him to catch up as they approached a familiar-looking area. It was one of the main side streets. Ok, maybe following this creature wasn't the best move, there was more likely to be more heroes patrolling the streets close to here, he was safer in the outskirts of town away from heroes and that's where most of the bad stuff happened away. But here, maybe he might change *all* to *most* of his plans were thought out. Alright, best to stay alert for now, however, he didn't see any immediate threats to his freedom roaming around, so he should be good for a little while.

He perched on the side of the building that was behind the main shops on the street, so he still had a high point, his wings trailed behind him, inactive aside from the occasional flutter or twitch of his feathers. The little sheep looked at him with its mildly unsettling beady eyes before trotting up to him and rubbing its nose against the cuff of his sleeve, Tommy watched with a mix of curiosity and amusement as the sheep plopped itself down next to his foot between his arm. He tentatively raised his other hand and watched for its reaction, when it only blinked at him, he slowly drew his hand closer before he rested it on the soft wool of its coat without any resistance. A small part of him relaxed and was content to stay petting the little animal but another part of him was wary, he still wasn't sure where this thing came from- after all it could be a conspiracy from the government to take him down. He wasn't sure.

His feathers twitched as he heard a set of footsteps, far too close to him for his liking. His wings raised, prepared to fly if he couldn't fight off whoever was trying to approach him. It also made him look more threatening (Tubbo had called him fluffy once though) as he reached for his head, his hood was still over his hair and his mask was still across his lower face, he could work with this- *oh shit he forgot to grab the spare headset*. Tubbo would murder him if the person approaching him didn't. *Oh yeah, there was a person approaching him*. Casting a glance behind him he almost jumped out of his skin, feathers and all.

"For the love of Philza, man you scared the shit out of me!" Tommy started, leaping away from the ghostly pale hand that was reached out towards him so now he was balancing on the edge of the roof, crouched down so that he could either launch forwards or backwards into the air behind him.

The hand and the body attached that held similar features to the sheep (more notably the wispy stuff and semi-transparency) in front of him stopped, a look of surprise crossed the owner's face, "How can you see me?" they asked in bewilderment.

"I have eyes, do you hear this bullshit, lil sheep?" the sheep merely blinked at him from where he'd leapt away from it.

"Hey, their name's Friend and it's not bullshit, you're just weird apparently," the ghost seemed to protest.

"What kind of name is Friend?" Tommy paused, "Actually, it's not that bad of a name. Oh wait, you're Phantom, you're pretty cool! Anyways, sneaking up on people isn't pretty pog, well except if they're criminals, but like, not me thanks. I don't know how they can't see you; actually, damn cameras can't catch you either. That's pretty pog, imagine if cameras couldn't see me, that'd be so pogchamp. It would make dropping off stuff so much easier."

Phantom just stared at him, his mouth slightly open in disbelief and Tommy would be too about meeting one of his inspirations if said inspiration hadn't just tried to arrest him, or whatever that was. Imagine if he thought Tommy was cool and that's why he hadn't arrested him yet, that'd be so pog.

"Uh you good, er, sir?"

Phantom shuddered, "please don't call me sir that just sounds weird."

"Um then, what are your pronouns?"

Phantom paused again and just looked at him, *like damn Tommy knew he was impressive, but could a guy go a few seconds without being weirdly stared at?*

"He/him," Phantom stated slowly, no longer reaching towards Tommy, instead, crouching down and gesturing for Friend to come over. Which they happily did, trotting towards him before nuzzling their outstretched palm. Phantom looked up at Tommy contemplatively, which was never really a good sign when dealing with potential threats because it was normally 'how should I murder this annoyance in front of me?' and not 'I wonder what tea they like?'. Tommy looked back nervously (he wouldn't admit that though, but he was a little nervous to be standing in front of a really pog hero, said really pog hero could also try and arrest him any moment), his feathers fluttered behind him betrayingly.

"Say, I'd be willing to pretend that this encounter never existed if you answer a question of mine," Phantom proposed, still petting Friend but there was a calculating glint in his eyes.

Tommy eyed the hero, "as long as it's not too personal I guess, no promises, plus I don't even know if you'll keep your word."

Phantom raised an eyebrow before he shrugged, "guess you'll just have to believe me."

Tommy just stared back at him before Phantom raised his attention from Friend and back to the literal vigilante in front of him, *man Tommy could have left so many times. Why was he still here? Oh right, he was too much of a fanboy to leave one of his favourite heroes on a roof even if that said decision could land him in federal prison.*

"When did you start this whole, thing?" he gestured to the night around them on the last word, his attention solely on Tommy (which was a little uncomfortable).

“Uhh..,” Tommy took a moment to count, it’d definitely been a while, “I think 5 or so years ago?”

Phantom didn’t comment but made a note of contemplation, as if he wanted to say more before he decided against it and merely nodded instead, picking Friend up into his arms, “well then, I best be going and for your own safety I think you should too.”

Tommy shrugged off the potential threat, “I wasn’t planning to stay in this area away, Friend just happened to lead me here.”

Phantom once again had that look of confusion on his face as he looked down at Friend, *surely*, he had noticed his sheep running around on buildings leading a wanted vigilante behind them. Tommy had no idea how you wouldn’t.

A scream interrupted Phantom’s confusion, it came from one of the buildings next to a neon-lit-*oh, this is why it looked familiar*. He’d already been here today; it was the building where the sketchy people had entered almost 8 hours ago. So, naturally because of his pog reflexes he was already in the air- *when did that happen-* weaving his way to another perch above the construction site that looked to have been put on hold for a while if the rust that was present on the scaffolding could indicate anything.

From his view he saw several stone statues in the open of people that looked that they were either screaming, about to run at or away or straight up about to stab someone with whatever they could get their hands on, very promising. The lady he saw prior in the red dress was having what looked like a one-sided conversation with someone else in the construction site under one of the overhangs, apparently whatever they were saying wasn’t very good since they screamed as the lady’s hair turned a dark green before splitting into- *was that fucking snakes?* Oh, for the love of Philza why him. A blur caught his attention as Phantom phased through a wall across from him on another building’s roof above the overhang. He was out of view of the lady but could see the few other sketchy people scattered around, Phantom briefly looked at him questioningly, most likely wondering if he’s engaging or backing out. Tommy gestured to under the overhang, he wasn’t backing out of a fight with some weirdos. It was practically his speciality.

Phantom seemed to sigh before giving him a thumbs up and jumping off the roof, falling through the overhang and landing on the lady, sending her to the floor as he leapt up at the next closest person. This caught other people’s attention as the main aggressor was knocked to the floor by some unknown force (at least that’s what Tommy presumed), they couldn’t see Phantom like he could if the shouts of confusion were any indicator. Tommy did a quick headcount, there were 12 people, one was currently being knocked out by Phantom and the lady was on the floor so that left 10 remaining threats. A beam of red light was shot towards the guy that Phantom was fighting, it flashed past his lower leg and Tommy watched as Phantom flinched back from the beam, a small part of his lower leg flaring red.

“Hey! Watch where you’re shooting that!”

Ok, he could be hurt even if he wasn’t seen.

He could work with that.

Tommy tipped himself forward and dove under the scaffolding, taking out one of the less challenging criminals with his wing before tackling the laser guy to the ground and landing a hit to their shoulder with his detached baton. He felt another presence and spun around, watching as another attacker’s eyes changed colour and *something* was supposed to happen- but as usual, it didn’t with Tommy because he was too pog. He ignored the look of surprise and lunged, taking another one down and casting a side glance to Phantom who had dealt with one of the lady’s

bodyguards, two other criminals of some description and was currently picking a one-sided fight with the other bodyguard who swiped at the air blindly. Tommy backhanded someone who was trying to sneak up on him and heard them hit the floor as he watched how Phantom swept his opponent's legs before elbowing them in the back to make sure they stayed down. *Alright, enough fanboying keep moving.*

Four targets left, Tommy leapt at the closest, striking them down with familiar ease before he felt the air go static. Not pog, well it wouldn't matter to him, but it probably would affect Phantom, so he connected his batons together into his staff and swung at the man that was responsible for it. Tommy heard the bodyguard drop to the floor in defeat yet again, this time staying down. One target left, they backed up frantically looking from Tommy who was approaching them to the air around them, a part of their clothing catching on one of the upturned nails on the ground, *who wears a long dress to a construction site of all places??*

They kept backing up and their dress seemed to be loving that, the fabric tore and they fell backwards towards a ledge so naturally Tommy jolted forward and caught their sleeve, tugging them forward away from the edge but manoeuvring their arms to behind their back. Just as he was about to bring them to the ground, he heard footsteps and turned to look, the sketchy lady from before was back up and running at him with her weird snake hair. She seemed to be rather pissy at him, so much so that she didn't realise her magic voodoo become stone powers weren't working as she flung herself at his unguarded back. Or at least he thought it was unguarded, Phantom seemed to come from nowhere (probably a wall or floor or something to be honest) and punched them in the gut, the woman folded and coughed out some type of fluid. Bit gross. Tommy pulled the other woman to the ground before jumping up onto the scaffolding at the sound of sirens in the area, there'd be more attention here soon and he'd rather not be caught on camera by some media crew.

He managed to scramble to one of the overlooking buildings tucked in the shadow of a higher one, he watched as Phantom said something to a communicator Tommy was concerningly previously unaware of before going through another wall out of his view. Well, out of his view until a sheep came from the neighbouring building's wall followed by their owner who looked at him for a moment.

“You aren't half bad,” Phantom pointed out as he once again picked up Friend.

Tommy scoffed, rolling his eyes at the hero in front of him though he quietly glowed at the praise from one of his idols, “I would sure hope so, I haven't been killed in 5 years, so I'd like to think I have a bit of pogness about me, I am the brave and mighty Rioteer after all.”

“Hold up is that a play on musketeer?”

Tommy just blinked at him; it was a pretty cool name he thought even if Ranboo *had* been the one to suggest it.

Phantom just seemed to sigh, “well, *the amazing Rioteer*, I best be going, thanks for the assistance I guess.”

“I feel like you're being sarcastic, also aren't you like- supposed to try and arrest me?”

“I do what I want when I want, and I'd rather not go through all that hassle right now if I'm being honest, but if you keep sitting there, I might change my mind.”

“Right right, going going, bye-bye ghost man!”

Tommy leapt from the building into the air, flying lower than he usually did due to all the police

and potential media crew in the area. He wove his way through tighter areas and opted to take the longer more complicated way home in hopes of losing any potential unnoticed and unwelcomed company trailing him. Even if he did believe Phantom wasn't lying.

"TOMMY YOU LITTLE SHIT COME BACK HERE!"

Tommy ducked past Ranboo on his panicked escape from the balcony entrance and into the living room with their dining table in the middle of it before Tubbo caught up to him.

"Answer me this *raccoon man* WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE THE HEADSET WITH YOU???"

Tommy put his hands up defensively, "you said you were working on it and that I shouldn't take it!"

"Yeah! We have more than one set dumbass!"

"Well, I forgot about that until after I left!"

"Why didn't you come back when you noticed?"

"Because I thought someone was about to stab me!"

"**WHAT?**"

"No cereal for dinner for a week."

"What! You can't do that! I did nothing wrong!"

"You caused me unnecessary stress worrying about if you were ok, I think you can live without cereal at 1 am for a week."

Tommy paused and turned down his shouting, "sorry Tubbo, I really didn't intend to freak you out, I honestly did just forget about them."

Tubbo rolled his eyes before stepping around the table, punching him in the shoulder with a protest of *ow* before opening his arms and staring at Tommy. It was Tommy's turn to roll his eyes at the older yet shorter boy as he stepped forward and hugged him.

He really did appreciate his flatmates.

"So has the murderous rampage been stopped?"

At least one of his flatmates.

Tommy and Tubbo both turned to glare at the dual-toned boy but neither moved from their hug.

"Ok... I'm just gonna go... because I value my safety like a normal person..."

As Ranboo retreated from the room Tommy shared a grin with Tubbo, unclinging themselves as Tubbo called out to their other flatmate.

"You have 5 seconds to run, boo!"

Somewhere, on a rooftop that overlooked the city, its height rivalling the Hero HQ building that stood proudly above the other buildings in its district. A hand reached down to idly pet their companion as they watched the setting moon on the horizon, old memories had resurfaced tonight, and he wasn't completely sure why. Sure, he'd finally managed a glimpse and even a full conversation with the famous Rioteer, a vigilante on the streets that was rumoured to usually watch over the outer districts. Hell, if Friend hadn't led him to where he was patrolling, he doubted he would have seen him at all if the last five years of supposed silence were anything to go by. Sure, he mentioned cameras seeing him- *he mentioned cameras*, where, would be the main question, it'd be a pain to figure out. But he had a way of being stubbornly persistent, so he doubted the challenge would keep him busy for more than a week.

Maybe that's where the memories came from, a distant memory of a silent little boy he'd seen during one of his shifts in his early training days. Running in an alleyway, from some threat he'd never ended up finding for when he scanned the area for what caused the boy's panic, he'd been unsuccessful and when he'd turned back to look for the child- there was nothing. The boy was gone, and he was left with an unnatural feeling in his stomach that only seemed to leave as he left the surrounding area. He had never gotten closure from that patrol, he never found out what happened to the boy, the one with frazzled, dirt-stained blonde hair and frantic blue eyes running through the dark.

Friend nudged his palm again with their muzzle, a constant source of comfort since he'd managed to bring them into existence that one night when he'd laid awake on his bed staring into the dark and wishing he wasn't so alone. If only the rest of his troubles were that easy to fix with the appearance of his fluffy blue companion. Though he did wonder why Friend had gone off and found a vigilante randomly, it wasn't like they hadn't worked at the same time before. He was sure of it. It had been five years, after all, they'd have been bound to have worked at the same time due to them both being nocturnal patrollers. Maybe it had been a range thing? He wasn't sure.

He cast an inquiring gaze at his companion, who as always blinked back at him innocently before turning away. The little shit always knew something he didn't, he wondered sometimes if that was for the best but then he'd always remember how often curiosity tended to get him in trouble. What could he say, curiosity killed the metaphorical cat, and he was the metaphorical cat although sometimes, satisfaction couldn't bring it back.

Chapter End Notes

Friend is now my favourite character.

Think of all the plot convenience I can fit into their all-knowing beady little eyes.

Chapter 3: I Just Love The Smell of Gunpowder In My Coffee

Chapter Summary

Tommy meets Wilbur for the first time, it goes... *alright*, well the customers probably wouldn't describe it that way, a more common description would probably be *positively terrifying*.

Chapter Notes

- You guys in the comments are so sweet <3
- Archives crashed when I uploaded this the first time- so I had to retype everything :)

TW: Guns

Tommy awoke early, his body used to waking at 5 am before the blaring alarm he so detested on Monday mornings that signalled the start of another working week where he couldn't let his nightly activities affect his daily performance and he couldn't raise suspicions to his boss about the occasional visible bruise.

Don't get him wrong, he enjoyed his part-time job's quaint environment and the opportunity of meeting new people as Tommy and not his vigilante persona but sometimes he really hated getting up in the morning. But then he remembered he was about 30 seconds from being murdered if that stupid alarm went off even though Tubbo was the one that set it.

Collecting his singular pair of somewhat work-appropriate clothes which consisted of a white polo shirt (with another wing design on the back, seriously Tubbo thought he was so funny) and beige pants. He put his black apron in his bag that Tubbo had stitched little red stripes into one night when he was out patrolling and forgot to tell him until he got to work, leaving him to explain to Puffy why there was random stripes on his apron when he had no clue.

He arrived at the small corner shop café at 5:25 am, he entered through the back door and took his apron out of his bag, hooking his bag on the coat rack and expertly tying the apron around his back as Puffy walked through the door to the backroom.

A smile found its way onto her face, "good morning, Tommy."

He grinned back at her, "morning Puffy, you mind if I open?"

"Yeah, no problem, I'll be in with you in just a moment, I just have to go grab another bag of coffee beans, we were running low out front."

"Ay ay," Tommy mini saluted before walking through the door she entered from, strolling over to the café door and flipping the sign on the front to open. The small tv hooked up to their wall was

currently inactive meaning he got first choice of which news channel to put on and there was no way in hell he was dealing with that awful news anchor on channel 7 that always managed to make interviews awkward. So, he picked another at random, well, not random, just one that happened to cover a lot more news around vigilante activities. He'd rather stay informed of any public information released on his co-workers.

As he put the remote on top of the cupboard behind the front counter the bell above the door chimed signalling someone's entrance. He glanced over to the door where a tired-looking man who gave off the vibe that he hadn't slept in days and was running purely off coffee was standing, he walked over to the counter, stumbling a little before steadying himself against the countertop.

"You good man?" Tommy questioned, not sure if the man in front of him was also on something else or just extremely exhausted.

"Yeah, sorry, just had a long night," the man in question replied, whose eyes were brown and mixed with hints of swirling misty white, "can I get a latte with five shots of caffeine please?"

"What the fuck man, just do cocaine," Tommy muttered in surprise, which the man managed to catch, a small smile forming on his face as he exhaled.

"Also, sorry to disappoint but I don't even think I'm allowed to give you five shots? I think the max I can do is three?" Tommy added, searching through the different types of coffee on the register's menu.

The TV crackled to life as a red banner flashed across the bottom of the screen, 'breaking news' it read while a news reporter appeared to the side of the screen.

"The hero Phantom was seen last night at one of the construction sites that has been on strike for the past month, many workers refusing to come to work, going on strike until safety regulations are upped following the death at the very same site from a particularly high fall."

Tommy shuddered as he thought back to the woman he'd grabbed before she'd fallen over the edge, *what if he hadn't been fast enough?*

He shook the thought from his head as fast as it came, he caught her and besides he was at work, with a customer who was admittedly also distracted by the news but a customer nonetheless.

"Phantom was seen after the site was shut off by police and criminals were in the process of being contained," the view of the reporter cut to the scene last night, Phantom was obviously conversing with the officer in charge of managing the scene informing him of the events.

The camera once again cut to another shot of a man being shoved into the back of a police car, "*f--k you and your little red rat b--stard of a friend,*" the man shouted at the hero as he was contained. Said hero just stared at him, not in hostility or pity, just blankly stared and watched him being ushered away by police.

"Many are speculating the identity of the other present at the scene last night, some debating that it was likely another nightly hero who just wanted to escape media attention but others speculating it to be the vigilante Rioteer who could've made an appearance instead, though no camera footage of the other party was caught."

The man in front of him grumbled a little, though Tommy suspected it was at the TV, "alright, I'll take a triple shot," he sighed as he slid his card towards Tommy who made short work of dialling him up and returning his card before heading over to the coffee machine as the man slunk over to a

nearby table and promptly appeared to pass out. As the machine whirled into life and started heating milk, he heard the door open before it clicked closed again, Puffy walking out with two bags of coffee beans and lifting them to the bench behind the front counter.

“Rough night, Wil?” she called over to the passed-out man, *so apparently Puffy knew him, did that mean he was a regular? How had he never seen this man before today?*

“Mmm,” was the reply as Tommy finished off his latte, bringing it over to his table and gently setting it down in front of him.

“You guys know each other or something?” Tommy asked, looking more at Puffy in confusion than the man whose face was being acquainted with the tabletop.

“Oh! Yeah, Wilbur’s an old friend of mine, he swings by pretty regularly but it’s usually on the weekends when you don’t work,” Puffy explained as she opened one of the bags and started pouring it into the back of the grinder.

Tommy’s mouth made a little ‘o’ shape as he nodded, “early riser too? That’s pretty shit not gonna lie.”

Wilbur groaned into the table and Tommy imagined he would’ve rolled his eyes at him had he not been laying on the table, “the one time I’m here for your shift and all you do is make fun of me?”

“You act as if someone’s spoken about me to you before,” Tommy raised his eyebrow at Wilbur as one of his eyes peeked through his fluffy brown hair that covered part of his face.

Wilbur glanced over to Puffy, “that’s because someone has.”

Tommy spluttered, “why??” he looked over to Puffy, “I feel like you shouldn’t be giving my information to some crazy on the streets.”

Puffy raised an eyebrow at his words but smiled nonetheless, as Wilbur defended himself, “hey! I’m not homeless, you child!”

“You didn’t say you weren’t on drugs though,” Tommy pointed out.

Which Wilbur hit back with, “at least I wasn’t recommending customers to do them!”

Puffy looked at him with mild concern, “I wasn’t the one wanting five shots of caffeine in my drink!”

Puffy just sighed at both of them and watched as another customer walked through the door, heading over to the register to get their order as they glanced apprehensively towards the squabbling pair.

Wilbur grinned at him and Tommy almost shuddered at it, “shouldn’t you be working?”

“Shouldn’t you be drinking?” Tommy retorted and when Wilbur sent a confused glance his way he gestured to the coffee sitting on the table in front of him, “your coffee might be getting cold.”

“Right...” Wilbur nodded, however that was possible when resting your head against a table Tommy wasn’t sure.

“I’m gonna go do, y’know- my job.”

It'd been a few hours since opening and Tommy was once again behind the register taking customer's orders and preparing them when he could, sitting them on the counter where Puffy would give them to the tables where the appropriate number was that Tommy had drawn on the cup after seeing where they sat. For customers that wanted to order takeaway he just wrote their names on the cups and called them when they were made.

It wasn't until around 2 hours after Wilbur had left that someone else he knew walked through the café door, a grin split his face, followed by the feathers behind his ears perking up as he watched Schlatt enter with Quackity, "sup Fragrance man, Big Q, do you want your regular orders?"

Schlatt grinned at him, "Hey Tommy, how have you all been?"

"Pretty good, Ranboo was only thrown out the window once and Tubbo only tried to kill me on two separate occasions since we've spoken," he answered as they came up to the counter while he ground the coffee beans.

"Amigo, didn't we see you, like, a week ago?" Quackity inquired, laughing but in a way that was half joking and half fearing for someone's safety but giving a thumbs up to Tommy's order request.

"Yeah, but I mean the attempted murder's normally pretty justified."

One of the other patrons glanced over at him with concern and he only nervously laughed before holding his hands up at them in a joking manner, even if he wasn't *completely* joking.

Schlatt only laughed at him, reaching over the counter to ruffle his hair as Tommy poured a cup of drip coffee that had been left to do its thing since Puffy set it up earlier this morning and added milk to another one. "One percolated coffee for you," he pushed the cup of drip coffee towards Schlatt and dusted Quackity's with cocoa powder, "and one cappuccino for you."

"Thanks, kid," Schlatt sent him one of his smaller more reserved smiles before it became a smirk as he slid a hundred dollar note over the counter towards Tommy just looked up at him, "keep the change."

Tommy laughed nervously as he exchanged it in the register for change, "I feel like you're bribing me in advance."

Quackity only laughed at his comment as Schlatt replied, "nah, I like to do that all up front, in advance is just a hassle."

Tommy eyed Schlatt as he went to go sit at a nearby table, "you don't want anything from me now?"

Schlatt shook his head, "tell Tubbo I said hi though, I haven't been able to visit him in recent weeks due to clashing schedules."

"Oh, is he with Combustion right now?" Tommy had completely forgotten his roommate took classes with the pro chemistry hero on Monday mornings, but he supposed it was fitting considering his knack for understanding things. *Oh, and the fact he wanted to explode everything.*

Schlatt nodded while Quackity's eyes widened, "how'd you manage that?" he asked, his eyes wide in bewilderment as he turned to his boss.

"I actually didn't, it was Tubbo who got the internship for himself," Schlatt grinned, clearly proud of his kid for his supposed negotiating skills and Tommy vaguely remembered the backup plan that required Tommy to do some stalking, thank Philza they didn't get there though.

“Mm, I think Ranboo knows him somehow too, I don’t know how the hell he does but I swear I learn something new about him daily,” Tommy stated, leaving out the fact that he was pretty sure Ranboo worked at the Hero’s HQ as a secretary. It was too much of a public space for that kind of information.

Schlatt nodded at Tommy as Puffy remerged from the breakroom, her gaze quickly spotting Schlatt, “hey lil bro.”

Schlatt deflated at the name, “Hey Puffy,” he sighed.

“Don’t act so happy to see me,” she laughed as she walked towards the table next to the pair where two empty cups sat, along with the usual spill someone was bound to make during each of his shifts, speaking of his shifts he hadn’t seen Niki today. Which was odd considering it was past 7:30 and she was usually here at 6:30 delivering their baked goods and other creations as she was their best local baker.

“Yo, is Niki stopping by today?” Tommy directed at Puffy as he wiped the bubbles off the milk spout, Puffy stopped wiping the table and looked over at him thinking before she answered, “pretty sure she should be here in 15 minutes or so, you’re welcome to take a break now and keep an eye out for her?”

Tommy nodded and approached the table she was wiping, collecting the cups, “tell her I said hello?” Puffy added, glancing up at him as he began walking back.

He nodded and pushed through the door to their breakroom but not before giving a two-fingered wave at Schlatt and Quackity’s table, which was returned in the form of an acknowledging smile from the former and finger guns from Big Q.

Piling the cups in the back sink he clicked the door shut with his foot and dusted his hands on his apron, striding over to his bag where he’d managed to steal a container of their leftovers from the other night. Ranboo wasn’t half bad at cooking spaghetti.

Tommy pulled over the stray chair that was back here, having been deemed unfit for the café due to its unbalanced leg that many Karens that they had consistently complained to them about ‘how this was completely unacceptable and was clearly a safety hazard’ like *ok damn, hope you break your wrist then if it’s such a safety concern*. But eventually, the chair had been relocated to the backroom, the set of four becoming a three in the main area. Tommy sat down on it, only slightly aware of the uneven tilt as he ate his beloved pasta.

Closing the container after he was done, with the fork stored inside the plastic container he put it back into his bag that was on the coat rack that only held his bag and Puffy’s coat that she’d taken off a while ago.

The sound of Niki’s signature van interrupted his thoughts, he walked over to the back door and opened it with a smile upon seeing Niki’s iconic hair through the driver’s window. He stepped out of the store and over to the now parked car where Niki was currently getting out, waving cheerfully at Tommy.

“Good morning, Tommy,” she beamed as she walked to the back of the van and opened the doors which displayed the copious amount of baked goods inside for each of the stores she was delivering to.

She pulled over three separate crates full of packaged goods, one contained a frozen compartment, another was stacks of goods in brown paper bags and the last was a stack of translucent containers

that showed the intricately designed cupcakes inside.

“Wow, you really outdid yourself, Niki,” Tommy whistled, accepting the crate he was given to take inside.

Niki laughed softly at his comment, “thank you, Tommy, that’s really sweet of you.”

Tommy only grinned at her before taking the crate he was given with the paper bags inside and setting it on the bench located in the back room. He waited to the side of the door as Niki entered and did the same with the crate that contained the cupcakes. He picked up the last crate and watched as Niki came back out the door with three crates in hand along with the frozen compartment, she’d obviously dropped off yesterday.

“Is Puffy here?”

“Yeah, but she’s manning the register at the moment, she said to say hello to you on her behalf though.”

“Aw, could you tell her I say hello as well?”

“Of course.”

“Thanks, Tommy!” she beamed as she tucked the crates away in the back of her van.

“No problem, Niki”

“Well, I best be going, lovely to see you as always.”

Tommy waved the best he could while holding a slightly heavy crate in his arms, “cya ‘round!”

Niki waved back at him before shutting the van’s back doors and sliding into the driver’s seat once again and reversing from the dead-end miniature alleyway that was next to the café. Tommy watched as she left before turning around and heading inside, shutting the door behind him as walked through the backroom with the crate. *Best to put these straight into the cooler display.*

He took the crate through the door back into the main area of the café where Puffy was tending to the guests, she glanced back at him as he re-entered “I take it Niki’s swung by?”

Tommy nodded as he crouched down and begun to put the range of colder goods into the display with a pair of tongs, mostly the ones containing creams such as the cream buns and chocolate eclairs.

The smashing of glass caught his attention and his face screwed up as he watched two armed men break through one of the shop windows, *like, man, for the love of Philza, could you just have used the fucking door?*

Apparently, that wasn’t the correct reaction to being robbed as he remembered the store he *worked* at was the one currently being robbed and from his spot crouched on the ground behind the counter he saw many patrons freeze as one of them held up a gun.

Puffy was inherently having none of that as she promptly dropped to the ground from her position which was rather close to them, sweeping one’s feet from under them as they tumbled unexpectedly to the ground. *Damn, that was pog, he’d have to ask Puffy to teach him that move. Well, after this was taken care of. Did they really have to break the window?? AND WHO EVEN ROBS A CAFÉ?? Shit was that a gun.*

Tommy glanced over at Schlatt who looked mildly pissed at the whole situation if the literal fucking gun that was in the process of being halfway pulled from his pocket as he scowled at the men intruding on the usually friendly environment was any indication. He managed to catch Schlatt's eye as he slowly stood, more worried about him than the men Puffy could clearly take care of.

'Don't' he mouthed as he slowly shook his head, 'Puffy' he looked over to her before looking back where Schlatt was sitting with an unusually quiet Quackity.

"Fine," he grunted almost silently, sliding the gun back into the supposed holster in his pocket, Tommy was a little concerned at how calm Quackity was when his boss just so happened to pull out a gun.

Tommy then turned his attention to the actual criminals, one was lying on their side and one was currently attempting to have a fistfight with his boss, who had a streak of flowing rainbow in their usually pure white hair. *Damn, she was owning them, Puffy's so pog.*

Oh, Tommy should probably call the police.

He tugged the phone he frequently used to contact Tubbo from his pocket and brought up his speed dial.

Tubbo-xed like a fish

Ambulance

Ranboob

Fire Department

Police

He hit police and held the phone to his ear as it rang, an emergencies respondent picking up quicker than he'd anticipated.

"Emergency services, how can I help you?"

"Hello, there's been an attempted robbery at Little Duckling's café, two armed men busted through one of the windows, the one with the gun is on the floor unconscious and I'm unsure of any weapons the other has on him but I think he'll be out soon enough."

"Understood, we'll send a police squad down, however, I must ask why the men are unconscious?"

"My manager, the owner of the café Puffy, she has a rainbow stripe in usually white hair, not sure if you'd recognise her, but she is currently kicking their sorry asses."

"Alright, thank you, sir, I do ask that you stay on the line until our services reach you."

"Ok, but I assume they'll be here soon considering I can hear the sirens."

The lady on the line made a noise of agreement but Tommy was more interested in watching Puffy effortlessly avoid every punch or half-assed kick sent her way and instead retaliated in her own much more effective attacks until they inevitably hit the ground. Puffy kicked away the gun in the other man's hand and knelt on the hands behind the other's back successfully pinning him to the floor.

“That was so badass,” Tommy muttered as he watched her, Puffy gazed up at him in amusement and sighed, “did you call the police?”

A police car pulled up in front of the store and Tommy just grinned at Puffy as she smiled back at him, “nice job kiddo, could you go get the dustpan though?”

Tommy followed her gaze towards the shattered glass on the floor, understanding lit his gaze, “sure.”

Now that most of the mess was sorted, it had taken a while for Puffy to speak with the police while Tommy thanked the guests for their co-operation and patience, giving out coupons to the more judgemental ones as he escorted everyone out, making sure to avoid the pile of glass he’d swept to the side.

He’d said goodbye to Quackity and Schlatt with the latter rather annoyed at the disturbance muttering about how much of a scumbag the pair were and Tommy couldn’t help but slightly agree, *because seriously why did they have to smash a window?*

Soon after the pair had departed the store was deserted apart from himself and Puffy who only seemed to sigh at the broken window after Tommy had collected the shards in a dustpan.

“Pricks,” he scoffed as he eyed the broken window which had been crossed over with caution tape, because y’know- normal people stepped through broken windows.

“That was eventful.”

“Touché, recon you could teach me some moves later?”

Puffy looked indecisive before she eventually settled on an answer, “alright but only because I don’t want some douche picking on one of my ducklings.”

Tommy ignored the last part in favour of punching the sky excitedly, “pogchamp, I get to be badass!”

Puffy laughed at his antics, switching the sign from ‘open’ to ‘closed’ on the front door (no surprise why), “I have one rule though.”

Tommy gestured for her to continue, “you’ll come to my place to practice, preferably this coming Wednesday’s afternoon, but if I’m to teach you it doesn’t mean you can just pick a fight with anyone that strolls in here.”

Tommy rolled his eyes, he didn’t pick fights in here anyway, he kept that for outside, besides she acted as if he had no fighting ability.

“Whatever floats your kayak, Puffy.”

“... what does that even mean.”

“Have you never seen a kayak before?”

“...”

“Puffy!”

“TUBBO!!”

“What do you want now?”

“Hey, I have you know I don’t want things from you that often.”

“Sure, Big Man,” Tubbo rolled his eyes as he rounded a corner and spotted Tommy entering from the front for once instead of the balcony, but that was only because it was still light outside.

“Big T, you aren’t going to believe what happened today.”

“You say that every time.”

“Yeah, but that’s because it’s so pog you had to be there for it.”

“Right... so, what happened?”

“Well, some fuckers decided it would be great to smash through the store window-”

“Wait in broad daylight?”

“Yeah, pretty stupid of them if you asked me,” Tommy continued as he heard Tubbo’s noise of agreement, “so, I was gonna deal with it but turns out I didn’t need to! Puffy just kicked their asses in basically no time, it was so badass.”

“What else happened?”

“Well, your dad tried to potentially shoot one, but I stopped him.”

“Wait, my dad??”

“Oh yeah, he says hi by the way.”

“Ok...”

“So then after we sorted stuff out with police and cleaned up and all that boring stuff, I asked Puffy if she could teach me some moves.”

“Oh, is this where the excitement comes from?” Tubbo questioned as his friend hung his apron over the coat rack beside the door.

Tommy nodded, “yeah she agreed to teach me some stuff at her house this Wednesday afternoon.”

“Do you even know where she lives...?”

“Uhh...”

“I presume not then; do you want me to get it, or will you ask like a normal person to avoid questions down the line?”

“I’ll text her...” Tommy ended in a laugh, fishing his phone out of his pocket that he’d previously called the police on and sent through a text to Puffy.

Hey, I don’t actually know where you live so uh, it the less creepy way possible I want to ask: where do you live?

Tubbo snorted at his message, "great communication skills there, big man."

"Thanks, I get them from the best," he sent a glare at Tubbo that held no real heat behind it.

Tubbo laughed, patting him on the back, "I know, I know, I can be such an inspiration."

Chapter 4: I'm A Vigilante, Not A Hero

Chapter Summary

Tommy gets some new toys, Techno ignores the law in favour of party crashing and Wilbur just... exists.

TW: Descriptions of Blood, Mentions of Pedophilia, Implied Murder

Chapter Notes

- I might rewrite this chapter in future, I wasn't quite happy with how this chapter kept turning out but I wanted to acknowledge certain parts of Tommy's character, so, oh well I guess.

“Hey, Tubbo?”

An ‘mmm’ was his only reply as Tubbo bent over his work carefully, fitting wires and other things together in a way Tommy would most likely never understand.

“Do you think I could take the discs out for a trial tonight?”

Tubbo paused his work in their side room of the apartment, the one dedicated solely to the trio’s side hobbies which mainly centred around Tommy’s nightly activities.

“You do know how they work, right?”

“Yeah, you kept briefing me on them over and over and over again, how could I not?”

“That’s only because I thought you were zoned out half the time.”

“Wow, rude, I have you know I only zone out when you’re talking about boring stuff.”

“You zoned out when I explained to you how the mechanics of your batons worked.”

“Yeah, *boring stuff*, I only needed to know what it *did not how it did it*, you know as well as I do that I wouldn’t be able to understand why shit works the way it does.”

Tubbo sighed and pointed to a padded black box, “if you really want to, go ahead, *but bring your headset this time.*”

Tommy chuckled nervously, “ay Big T.”

Tommy crossed the room and unclicked the box, revealing the two discs that looked like pieces of vinyl with one decorated by a green ring and the other a purple ring, a tribute to his teammates if you would. They clicked to the two wristbands magnetically, each only reconnecting to the one it was unclicked from, the wristbands also had colour coordinated rings on them. Tommy slipped

them onto his wrists and clicked the discs on, shifting his arms around to get used to the weight. The discs were pretty lightweight but they reminded him of a slightly larger more flattened version of a discus so he had no doubt it would fly well.

“The button’s for recalling, correct?”

“Yeah, it should work regardless of whether it’s stationary or in motion.”

“Pog.”

Tommy unclicked the purple disc by the small latch, he watched as he felt the weight shift, but the disc stayed on the wristband. He flicked his arm forward and the disc went flying into a wall, scoring itself in the side.

“That’s so badass,” Tommy cheered but went quiet at the glare Tubbo sent his way, “sorry, sorry, I’ll be more careful.”

Tommy clicked the button on side of the glove that recalled the disc, sending it flying back towards his wristband where it reattached and clicked into place again. *Oh, so he had to detach it each time. That’s probably a good move on Tubbo’s behalf.*

His gaze went to where the disc had left a mark in the wall, and he hadn’t even thrown it that hard. He looked at the bench below it where a case sat, that was a new one, *or at least he thought so.*

“What’s in the case?”

“Which one?”

Fair call.

“Uh, the long somewhat skinny black box, under where I just hit the wall.”

“Oh, they’re what Combustion’s teaching me, it’s a bunch of smoke orbs but they’re not completed yet. When they are I’d be willing to let you try them on the field, so long as you don’t use them preferably in front of any heroes if necessary but *definitely* not in front of Combustion. I’d rather not be inquired into for *your* nightly expeditions, even if that is a valid move by the authorities.”

“Noted, anyway, speaking of authorities, where’s Ranboo? Did the bitch go and get arrested for height fraud?”

Tubbo’s sigh was audible as he looked up from both his gadget and the curls of his hair, “as much as I would love height fraud to be an actual crime, I’m pretty sure there’s nothing of the sort. Besides, Ranboo’s still at work.”

“Oh yeah, I forgot he does that.”

Tubbo rolled his eyes and threw an upgraded headset at him, well, Tommy assumed it was upgraded even if it looked like the same black headpiece that hooked around his ears and mini microphone on the side.

“Put it on, then hit the button on the side.”

Tommy did as instructed, placing it over his head and fitting the earpieces where they should be before feeling for the button on the side opposite the microphone. Finding the bump, he clicked it and watched in amazement as glass unfolded from either side and covered his eyes with the glass

meeting in the middle.

“Woah, that’s pog.”

“Can you see clearly?”

“Yeah, is it not tinted?”

“Uh, something like that, it’s one-way glass, so I can’t see your upper face.”

Tommy grinned, “sweet! Wait, test, what colour are my eyes?”

Tubbo stared at him, “... Tommy, I’ve lived with you for six years, your eyes are blue.”

“Oh yeah, good point.”

Tubbo sighed, “please go do whatever the hell you do at night without getting yourself killed.”

“Another great idea,” Tubbo gave him another disappointed stare, “ok, ok, I’m going!”

Tommy ran across the buildings that led away from his house, gear fully equipped and discs secured attached to his new wristbands. He reached the edge of his district where one of the outer main roads separate the next district over and jumped. Off the building, free-falling to the road until his wings made their grand entrance, catching the updraft and launching him further into the sky.

He let out a whoop as he zipped over the skyline, always scanning the alleyways and darker corners below him as he flew amidst the lower clouds.

His headset hummed into life; the volume not being overbearing for once.

“Multiple heroes spotted in district 7; avoidance recommended.”

“Do you know why?”

“Not yet, I’ll tell you when I do.”

He distantly heard Tubbo’s microphone pick up the sound of a door opening before the sound cut off as it did after all Tubbo’s messages, Ranboo must’ve gotten back.

A blur of blue caught his attention among the tangle of back alleyways located behind one of district 12’s more popular bars. He dove towards the alleyway’s walls, wanting to get a better view before engaging.

He faintly caught Ranboo’s voice through his headset over the sound of the wind rushing past him, *“there’s a drug bust in district 7, scheduled at 11 pm tonight.”*

“Alright, thanks for the heads up,” he answered as he landed without so much of a struggle on the wall of the alleyway he first saw the blur in.

There it was again.

A small child in a grubby blue shirt ran past again, their eyes were blown wide and their breathing was erratic and as he listened he could hear more footprints, at least two sets were also running through the alleyways and from the noise of impact it wasn’t children.

One of the footprints came closer to where the kid had managed to box themselves in, separating from the other set. A clearly drunken man stumbled around the corner and grinned at the child with their chipped and missing teeth, the child whimpered and curled in on itself. Tommy almost snarled, instead opting to try out his new gear properly, unclicking the disc and launching itself in the path of the man before jumping from the wall to behind the man and recalling the disc. It shot from the wall into the man's stomach, sending him backwards towards Tommy where he promptly round-house kicked him into the wall and caught the disc on its correct holder.

He stepped around the man slowly, holding his hands up to the child, trying to convey he meant no harm.

“Hey, it’s okay, I won’t hurt you, alright?”

The child just pressed themselves further against the wall, “are you lost?”

They nodded slightly, a broken voice replying, “mummy told me to wait while she got something, but someone tried to touch me, so I ran and now I don’t know where she is.”

Tommy nodded, “I’ll bring you to your mummy, okay?”

The other pair of footsteps rounded the corner, drawn by their voices as Tommy stood within arm’s length of the child.

“There you went you little shit! Tried runnin’ from me didn’t ya, boy?”

“I’m not a boy,” they grumbled.

“What was that?” the approaching man spat, stepping closer causing the child to once again back themselves against the wall.

Tommy turned on his heel his wings raised shielding the child from the man, another disc already unclicked before he threw his arm forward with the momentum of his turn further aiding the disc as it slammed into the criminal’s upper thigh, Tommy swore he heard something crack as the man fell to the ground. Tommy grumbled to himself as he recalled the disc and dropped his wings, refocusing his attention on the child.

He held his arms out and kneeled down, “how about we get out of here?”

The kid nodded timidly, slowly inching towards Tommy as he waited, wings spread as far as they could in the little alleyway offering a cramped space to fly in. As the child finally settled in his arms Tommy pushed up and flapped his wings as much as he could given the confining space, landing the pair on the roof of the building neighbouring the alleyway. The child let out a little giggle as they reached behind his ear and petted the fluffy feathers that puffed up from the contact. Tommy softly smiled and lifted them higher to let them continue, their little heartbeat was slowing from its frantic beating before, so he tolerated the pets. There was no chance he secretly enjoyed it, no chance.

He found the entrance to the alleyway next to the neighbouring bottle store and gently placed the child down, “I’ll be right back in a second I promise, I just need to go get something I left back there, okay?”

They mutely nodded, huddling next to his legs as he straightened out, “count to 20 for me?”

They nodded again and stepped back, letting him launch back up over the alleyway as he searched for where he left the two men, he spotted one and dropped back into the alleyway, rummaging

through the unconscious man's pocket until he found a phone, stashing it in his own hoodie's pocket. He looked around and noticed it was only him and the man he'd taken care of first, *shit*.

His quick departure from the alleyway was fuelled by panic that only turned to a fierce desire to keep the child safe.

Tommy spotted the man almost immediately, diving back down as he sent one of his discs forward where it dug itself in between the man's shoulder blade drawing a cry of pain. Tommy landed between the crazed man and the child, his wings once again blocking the child's view more so now than the man's. He placed his steel-capped boot down on the man's neck, his usual humour when fighting criminals having disappeared as he spoke.

“Give me a reason I shouldn’t rid the world of another pest right now.”

The man spat something unintelligible at him and Tommy considered sending another disc at him but opted against it, Tubbo would be annoyed if they came back dirty. He recalled the disc from the man's shoulder and watched as blood collected around the area, so much for keeping the discs clean. He turned and threw it into the sky, hoping to clean some of the blood off with the clean air, recalling it while still in flight. He turned back to the child, both discs recalled and only one slightly dirty.

He flicked the phone he'd collected from the other guy out of his pocket and dialled emergency services again, managing to not have to retype the number despite wearing gloves.

The line rang and put him on hold, Tommy grumbled but gestured for the child to come closer so he could scoop them up. He lifted himself and the kid to the building's roof again, as he should've before, he settled them on the ground where they blinked at him unaware of the man bleeding out on the ground below them behind the striped curtains that were Tommy's wings.

“What's your name, brave jr?”

“It's Alec, what's your name mister?”

“You might know me as Rioteer, I'm a vigilante around these areas, I help people who need help, like you.”

Alec nodded and crept closer to where Tommy had crouched, leaning into his side before Tommy sighed and wrapped a wing around them as the pair waited for the police.

Tommy hummed as he watched Alec from where he'd promised the kid he'd be keeping an eye out from. The police had arrived a few minutes prior, but Alec was only now getting into a police car to be taken to the station while they looked for their parental figure. They'd already said their goodbyes and he'd explained that Alec probably shouldn't wave to him because while he'd saved them, he wasn't exactly liked by the police. Well, not exactly the police, more the law the police enforced.

“Didn't take you as the type to stalk children.”

Tommy whirled around and narrowed his eyes at the figure veiled in darkness but despite that fact he knew exactly who was in front of him.

“Didn't take you as the type to watch from the shadows, y'know, like a creep.”

The man grunted and stepped out from the shadows, sword glinting in his hand maliciously and

Tommy would be lying if he said he wasn't the least bit freaked out.

"Blade."

"Rioteer."

"Don't you have business elsewhere?"

The Blade raised an eyebrow at him that was only slightly visible from the skull mask he wore on his face, Tommy continued, "were you not invited to the party in a half hour?"

From the Blade's blank expression, he assumed that was the case, "damn, did they not need the number 1 hero, what a shame," he laughed nervously as the Blade changed his stance, he'd probably need to get going soon or risk losing a limb.

The Blade lunged and Tommy jumped.

He hadn't been nicked by that sword before and he'd rather not start now considering it was most likely made from netherite, one of the most highly sort after materials and it probably had some nasty paralysing agent on it. He'd seen the Blade fight before, as soon as he grazed them they'd just drop and it was either the hero's unknown ability at work or something else.

"New toys?" the Blade asked as he looked at the disc that separated them from when Tommy had instinctually shot it to get some distance between the pair.

Tommy recalled it before the hero could pick it up, but the slight blood stain was still noticed, "been busy, haven't you?"

Tommy scoffed, "you're one to talk, Mr *Hero*."

"Are you always this annoying?"

"Surely you should know this, besides, are you always this unobservant?"

The Blade stopped and Tommy directed his gaze to behind the dumpster at the entrance of the alleyway, "I thought I smelt blood," he grumbled.

"That you did," Tommy dryly laughed, "fucking deserved it too."

"And you decide that why?" the hero was standing on the edge of the roof overlooking the alleyway.

"You heroes do it all the time, don't act like you're on the moral high ground here, but I'd do that again to anyone who tries to touch a child, Alec shouldn't have had to deal with that shit."

The Blade seemed to pause at the information presented, glancing over to where Tommy had landed on the opposite edge of the building's roof out of his immediate range, "who's Alex?"

"Alec," Tommy corrected before elaborating, "they were the kid you accused me of stalking."

The hero made a noise of thought, "maybe you aren't too shabby."

I just murdered someone in an alleyway and that's what you say?

Tommy laughed, "y'know, someone else told that to me just the other night."

The Blade just looked at him and Tommy really questioned why he was still here, but as he was about to bid his farewell his headset came to life.

“There’s been a surprise attack on the heroes that were supposed to be busting the ring.”

“What’s the quickest route to district 7?”

“You’re in district 12?”

“Affirmative.”

“Go through district 9, should lead you right to the edge of district 7 where you should find them fairly quickly.”

“Copy that.”

Tommy pushed off the roof into the air, staring at the hero below him that hadn’t made a move to arrest him tonight unlike most of their encounters.

Tommy narrowed his eyes behind his eyewear, pondering another idea in his head, this one admittedly more *questionable* than his last.

“How heavy are you?”

The hero just stared at him, “I feel like that’s a bit of a personal question-”

Tommy rolled his eyes and cut him off, “are you under 90kg with your gear included?”

“Yes, why?”

“Truce for tonight while we go aid your co-workers?”

“What, why would my co-workers need help?”

“Because their party was just crashed, now do you want to help or not?”

“Alright, perhaps I won’t stab you for the next hour.”

“Perfect, sheath your stabby weapon and grab my hand.”

“What...” the Blade continued to do that thing where he just stared at him, but his sword was sheathed so that was a positive.

Tommy rolled his eyes before flying to his level, grabbing under the hero’s arms and booking it, huffing from the added weight but still flying higher into the clouds through district 9.

The Blade’s protests fell on deaf ears as Tommy soared through the skies at an impressive pace considering he was carrying a full-on adult in his arms that was probably carrying at least 10kg of concealed weapons.

The pair reached district 9 only a few minutes after Tubbo sent them the news of the attack, “when we get there, you go straight in, but I don’t exist, alright?”

“Why would I do that?”

“I could drop you right now.”

“I have ways of getting down.”

“If you’re implying the enderpearls that I can sense I want you to know that they fall at the same speed you do.”

“How do you know I’m carrying them?”

Tommy laughed a little, “please, I can sense them, they feel exactly like my roommate.”

The Blade didn’t respond to his comment, opting to focus on the smoke billowing up from a nearby warehouse, “that them?” the Blade’s voice reached his ears over the roar of the wind.

“I assume so, let’s go deliver a care package.”

“Was that just a video game reference?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

He swooped over the warehouse that’s roof was half caved in, most likely a result of someone’s ability, he lowered himself closer to the roof.

“Bombs away!” was the only warning the hero was given before being dropped onto the warehouse’s roof, the hero managed to catch his fall and jumped into the fray below while Tommy steered clear of the main warehouse.

Angling himself to the outer edges of the zone he tapped on his headset, “where was the ring supposed to be at?”

“Just north of the warehouse, believed to be four main participants.”

“Understood.”

Tommy circled the main building where he spotted, Combustion, the Smiler, Phantom, 404, Pyro and now the Blade (curtsey of Tommy of course) each picking a fight with someone close to them. They appeared to be destroying them (I mean you’d sure hope so) but Tommy believed that was because they’d gotten word of the raid and had sent cannon fodder distractions. That’s where Tommy came in.

Tommy recalled his disc as he took out another criminal that tried to come at him.

He’d managed to find the building they were holding the main deal in, they had been hurriedly trying to pack up before the distraction window was up. Too bad they’d not taken into considerations his appearance.

Tommy was having quite a good time, twirling through the floor with his batons connected and ready to hit anyone that got within close quarters while he played a poorly timed game of frisbee with the rest of the participants using his discs. He reckoned he was the nightly equivalent of a ballerina. If you exchanged the tutu for combat gear and point shoes with steel-capped boots he’d affectionately named ‘my other fist’ and ‘the floor’, which was useful for the phrase ‘meet my other first’ or ‘please be acquainted with the floor’.

He was 90% sure he had rendered at least two of the main dealers unresponsive (as they were currently unconscious on the floor), which was more than the heroes could say. *Oh, and the fact*

that he'd injured half the occupants of the room.

Another one of the front windows smashed as the Blade made his entrance “welcome, party crasher! Did they kick you out?” Tommy called over, turning his attention to the hero.

Said hero was launching at him with alarming speeds, Tommy flinched to the side as the Blade came at him with his sword, was an hour up? *Because if so, he was joking about the time limit, how serious was this guy??*

Turns out, he wasn’t the one about to be impaled, with a man who was reaching out for him instead being nicked by the Blade’s weapon, so he dropped to the floor. Tommy released a nervous breath, “thanks,” he said in a much quieter than usual his usual mannerisms.

“Don’t get used to it,” the Blade replied as he swung again, this time in front of Tommy at another approaching criminal.

Tommy didn’t bother answering, instead navigating himself over to a women in a suit who held a black briefcase in her hand as she attempted to leave via the back exit.

“Apologises but I can’t let you do that,” Tommy grinned as he flicked his staff towards her arm, resulting in the case clattering to the floor. The woman scowled and dashed forward, her fingers twisting into claws as they clashed with his staff. Tommy pushed forward, attempting to stomp on her foot but she moved out a range before he could. Tommy raised his staff to attack but switched at the last minute to release the disc, still impressed at how well Tubbo designed it. It indented itself into the wall behind the woman, “you missed,” she hissed victoriously, *damn she’s really going to hate what he’s about to do.*

“Whoops,” he shrugged, hitting the recall button and aiming it to return to his wrist by first sweeping her legs from under her. The woman fell backwards and attempted to rise before Tommy slammed his staff into her heel, *he should just ask Tubbo to get some restraints, damn.*

Scanning the rest of the room he saw that the Blade was handling the rest of the criminals well and the only container that appeared to be in the room was the one at his feet. He reached down and unclicked the lid, the box opened by to a padded inside with 7 vials, each containing the same glowy stuff he’d seen Philza holding a few days ago when he busted another drug deal. Though this time the stuff looked processed, it was a liquid rather than a powder and what he hadn’t noticed before was that it glowed significantly brighter than the powdered version.

Footsteps approached him and Tommy clicked the case shut, turning to see the Blade approaching him. Tommy picked up the case and got off the ground, walking over to speak with the hero. He held the case out to him, “pretty sure it’s the same stuff Philza turned into the police the other night, not sure what it is though.”

The Blade nodded and took the case, “you should probably be leaving, the rest are heading over shortly.”

Tommy nodded, “thanks, er- for not stabbing me.”

The hero exhaled, a smile appearing on his face before he managed to mask it back into his usual ‘I hate everyone’ face.

“Adios,” Tommy gave a two fingered wave as he kicked down the back door and took off into the smoky night.

Wilbur sighed as he entered the building through one of the surrounding walls, stepping over to his brother who stood in the midst of the people on the floor, a black case in one hand, a sword in the other.

The Blade swung his sword towards him before registering who was behind him, “lovely greeting as always, thanks,” Wilbur commented as he stepped backwards.

The Blade grumbled and lowered his weapon from the supposed spectre in front of him, “you look like you were busy while we were caught up elsewhere, how’d you even know we were here?”

His brother looked at him through his mask, “I didn’t, thanks for the mission invite by the way.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes and nudged the hero’s shoulder, “you know I don’t have a say in mission participants, besides, HQ thought we’d be fine.”

“I mean they were just goons, the element of surprise was the only thing they had going for them,” his brother grunted, sheathing his sword.

“How’d you manage to get here anyway, thought you were in district 14?”

“Saw something being thrown in district 12 so I went to go check it out and behold a certain wanted vigilante playing god.”

Wilbur raised an eyebrow, surely, he didn’t mean killing someone. He’d seen the vigilante save someone from falling to their death just the other night.

“The guy was allegedly trying to do some… rather unpleasant things to a kid he’d found in a back alleyway.”

Wilbur just nodded, gesturing to the case, “what’s in that?”

“Some vials Rioteer recons he’s seen Philza hand to the police before.”

“The one dad was complaining about a few days ago?”

“I believe so.”

“Damn, this guy’s been active, how is it he’s only chosen to socialise now?”

“Well, most interactions I’ve had with him before we tried beating the crap out of the other, the little devil’s more agile than he looks.”

“Great.”

The Blade hummed in agreement, holding the case out towards him, “I’ll sort this area out, you should probably give this to the authorities then head home and assure Phil we haven’t kicked the bucket yet.”

Wilbur nodded, taking the case and observing as it turned semi-transparent upon his collection of it, “good luck with the socialising.”

The Blade elbowed him before he could ‘go ghost’ and avoid his hit, “rude.”

Chapter 5: Plans for Tomorrow

Chapter Summary

“Strays?”

“Well, I didn’t steal them.”

&

“And you say I’m the clingy one.”

“Because you are!”

“I’m not the one with a tracker on the other’s belongings.”

Chapter Notes

- A bit shorter than usual but it's more a joining chapter, less action but I love bench trio interactions so much.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy strolled through the early morning streets in his work attire, bag hung across his torso, he rolled his steps inward, practising walking quietly in his normal striding pace. Maybe that was why he heard the patter of scrambling steps, more like paws if the supposed nails hitting the pavement were what Tommy thought they were. He checked his watch, he had around 15 minutes before he had to be at the café, even though he wasn’t sure if they were opening today.

Making another great decision, he sharply turned left and wandered into the poorly lit alleyway where he made out a cardboard box where the shuffling noise was coming from as two little shapes scrapped at the wall. Approaching the box, he knelt down closer, there were two small dogs, one fluffy white one and one smooth brown one.

“Hey buddies,” he muttered receiving a yip in reply, “I’m gonna just-”

He scooped the box with the dogs inside up, carrying it close to his chest as he exited the alleyway and continued to the corner café. He could ask Puffy if they could stay at the café, it’d been a nice addition to the quaint environment if they weren’t too loud. He could even see if a dog-friendly biscuit could be sold to give to small children wanting to interact with them.

“Pufffy,” Tommy called as he entered the back room and set the cardboard box next to the three empty crates from yesterday. He doubted Niki would need to come by today considering the abrupt closure yesterday.

Puffy pushed open the back door to a waiting Tommy standing in front of a box that seemed to be alive- or something in the box was alive.

Tommy heard her sigh, “if you take full responsibility for any damage caused, take care of them and keep the café clean then you can ask.”

Tommy beamed, “yes!”

Puffy wandered over, “what even are they?”

Tommy opened to box to two sets of eyes looking back up at them, one yipped happily and licked Puffy’s outstretched hand.

“Strays?”

“Well, I didn’t steal them.”

“Fair, but you’ve got to take them to the vet later and sort all that stuff out, I’d recommend buying a fence thing of some description.”

“Ay, also, what are we going to do about the window?”

“I pulled some strings here and there; someone should be arriving in 30 minutes to fix it so we can open for the rest of the day.”

True to her word someone did arrive later, a man named Charlie happily spoke with him as he mended the window with his ability. It was pretty impressive considering the chunk that had been taken out, but he was working on it flawlessly and in roughly a few minutes the hole was noticeably smaller.

“Is mending your ability?”

“Yeah.”

“You’ve definitely trained that one, I’ve never seen someone with mending fix something that big.”

Charlie grinned at him, “I’ve fixed worse.”

Tommy gasped like the fanboy he was because he was 90% sure he was talking to one of the best support gear creators, “really?”

“Yeah, I normally don’t fix café windows though, more hero costumes.”

“I knew it! You’re Slimecicle aren’t you?”

“Bingo, how’d you know?”

“Well, I find your work pretty pog, oh, and my roommate is a big fan. But you have a unique style of working,” Tommy explained, gesturing to the glowing green cracks that as they dimmed

revealed the undamaged glass below.

“Wow, didn’t know I had fans.”

“Are you kidding me? You’ve probably single-handedly saved so many heroes from wardrobe malfunctions,” Charlie laughed at Tommy’s enthusiasm.

“Man, you really know your stuff kid,” Charlie smiled as he finished up the window.

“Hey! I’m a big man, *a big man* you hear me?”

Charlie only laughed more as Tommy huffed, turning to face Puffy as she walked out of the backroom with two little furballs trailing her.

“Thanks for the help, Charlie.”

“No problem, Puffy and since when did you own these little yappers?”

“Since Tommy brought them in this morning.”

“Hush Puffy, you’re ruining my Big Man reputation.”

“Why do you need a big man reputation?” Puffy inquired, reaching down to pet the little white dog.

“To bargain with here Charlie, only big men can do such effective bargaining.”

“Oh, and what are you bargaining for?” Charlie continued while Puffy was playing with the surprisingly friendly dogs.

“Er-, um, I-,” Tommy paused, “I didn’t think I would get this far but fear not the brave Tommyinnit can overcome any challenge.”

“Er, for unlimited dog treats and the gifting of my beloved title of ‘Best Biggest Man’ I request you for a signature on this here piece of paper for my roommate,” Tommy continued, pulling his notepad from his apron pocket he used to take customer’s orders.

Charlie grinned, “I think I like your bargaining tactics, how about I throw in one future repair and we call it a deal?”

“Future repair?”

Charlie held out a small card that upon further inspection contained his creator name and number, “I fix something for you free of charge.”

“I thought your repair workshop wasn’t open to the general public?”

“I can make an exception.”

Tommy grinned and held out his hand, “deal.”

Charlie took it and shook, “pleasure doing business with ya.”

Tommy chased around the two little dogs in the backroom after his shift had ended, Puffy

watching him in amusement from the unbalanced chair.

“You wouldn’t happen to know anyone from any of the nearby vets?”

“Unfortunately, not,” Puffy laughed as Tommy sighed, “I could book an appointment for them before you head to my place tomorrow so we can go straight from here?”

Tommy nodded, reaching down to scratch underneath the white one’s chin, “we should name them.”

Puffy took a sip of her tea, “how about we call that one Bella?”

“Aw no way, they’re too badass for a soft name like *Bella*,” Tommy scoffed, continuing to pet the totally badass dog that was laying on its back.

“Alright I get your point, Bella it is.”

Puffy smiled, gesturing to the other one that was looking up at her for food, “what do you want to name this one?”

“They look pretty badass, what about Roxy?”

“Roxy it is,” Puffy nodded, stroking the little dog’s ear.

“You should probably head down to the store and pick up some actual dog food though, I doubt they’ve eaten anything nutritious in a while.”

Tommy gave a thumbs up, standing up to head to the door, “sorry Bella, your new father has to go get you some food, like a responsible parental figure.”

Tommy returned an hour later, dog pellet bag in hand as he walked through the back door to the two sleeping dogs, curled up on the cardboard box’s flattened form. He collected a bowl from the above cupboard, tearing a corner of the bag and sprinkling it into the bowl before setting it on the ground. Keeping the bigger bag out of reach from nosy puppies that would most certainly try and eat the entire bag.

Bella blinked an eye open at the noise of the bowl being placed beside them and nudged Roxy awake the pair eyeing the bowl before Bella sniffed it and happily started eating. Tommy let a small smile cross his face as he rubbed behind Bella’s ear, *walking down that alleyway this morning hadn’t been such a bad idea.*

“Hey Tubs,” Tommy saluted at Tubbo as he walked into the ‘devil’s lair’ (read hobbies room), “sup Big T, when’d you get back last night?”

Ranboo perked up from where he was writing in the corner.

“I thought I told you I’d be hanging around the scene for a bit?”

“I do faintly recall that, but I don’t think I heard from you after?”

“He fell asleep at his desk,” Ranboo informed, scribbling something down in his leather journal before pushing it to the side and collecting a loose sheet of paper.

“Boo, I woke up in bed.”

“I know, I even tucked you in,” he grinned, his tail swooshing happily behind him.

Tommy rolled his eyes, “and you tell me off for not sleeping.”

“That’s because your sleeping schedule is shit.”

“Guess we’re matching now, Ranboo how long until you join the ‘I can’t sleep’ train?”

“Uh, I have a lot of paperwork from that bust last night?”

“Good enough, welcome to the club,” Tommy grinned, turning back to Tubbo, “did you see my sticky note?”

“The pink one?”

“Yeah, I think it was pink, I wrote it at like- 2 am, don’t at me if I’m wrong.”

“It said, ‘don’t eat my spaghetti’?”

“Oh, that was my one,” Ranboo piped up while Tommy laughed nervously.

“Oh, that’s why it was so neat.”

“Rude,” Tommy scoffed, “I have you know if I bothered, I could write better than anyone, but I have to give you guys something to be better at than me.”

“What even happened to my container of spaghetti?”

“No clue,” Tommy lied, changing the subject, “you obviously didn’t get my note then?”

“Apparently not, what was it for?” Tubbo answered.

“Oh, it was feedback for the discs.”

Tubbo visibly perked up, stopping work over the same thing he’d been doing yesterday which was a little box that appeared to be hooked up to a computer containing various lines of code.

“How’d they go?”

“Worked like a charm, really helped out and they were surprisingly easy to get a grasp on.”

“That’s great to hear,” Tubbo got out his notebook and scribbled something down cheerfully, “was there anything that needed to be fixed or changed?”

Tommy scratched behind his head, “do you think you could add like, another mode for lethal and non-lethal combat that can be toggled between?”

Tubbo raised an eyebrow, “why?”

“I think I may have committed murder with them too easily.”

Tubbo wrote something else down in his notebook while Ranboo shuddered, “noted, Big Man.”

Tommy grinned, “thanks, Big T.”

“Also, before I forget-” Tommy rummaged around his pant’s pocket where he’d torn the page from

his notebook with Slimecicle's signature, "here."

He held the folded piece of paper out to Tubbo who took it cautiously, opening it like it might try and bite him. His eyes lit up as he turned the paper over in his hand, "is this legit?"

"Yup ran into him fixing Puffy's window, apparently 'pulling some strings' meant getting favours from high places, no clue how she knows him. Not that I'm complaining, I just need to find somewhere that sources dog treats."

Tubbo raised an eyebrow in his signature 'I'm questioning you' stare, "we stuck a deal," Tommy answered.

"How did you manage that?"

Tommy shrugged, "I was joking until I wasn't, and I just rolled with it, I have no idea."

"I not even surprised at this point."

"If you were I'd be concerned that you were an imposter," Ranboo added from his corner where he was filling out some sort of form.

"Boo, you're not funny."

"Imagine being unfunny, couldn't be me."

Tommy laughed at Tubbo's exasperated expression, "I hate it here," the ram-hybrid grumbled as Ranboo cackled from his seat.

Tommy sat idly on one of the higher buildings in district 3, a region he wasn't commonly in due to the more active nightlife by its participants, many wealthier folk residing within the white walls and grey roofed houses. Flaunting fancy cars with copious amounts of pubs and clubs that scattered their way through the district, attracting many nightly guests.

"*Why does my tracker say you're in district 3.*"

"Because I'm in district 3, also why do you have a fucking tracker on me??"

"*How do you think I always know how close you are to things?*"

"Didn't you ask if I was in district 12 last night and how long have you had that on me?"

"*I track your headset and I wasn't sure if it was working and it's been on your headset since basically the first prototype, originally for theft reasons but then it proved useful for knowing where you were causing trouble.*"

"And you say I'm the clingy one."

"*Because you are!*"

"I'm not the one with a tracker on the other's belongings."

"*Moving on, why are you even in district 3?*"

"Ha changing the topic, I win, bitch. And I'm here because I'm boreddd."

“Haven’t you been doing major busts the past few days?”

“True but I crave action, my friend.”

The headset picked up Tubbo’s sigh from the other end, *“I’ll go find the police patrol routes and any nearby heroes if I can.”*

“Thanks, Big T.”

He heard Tubbo huff, but he could practically hear the smile his roommate was wearing.

Tommy scanned his surroundings again, he only needed to worry about aerial heroes up here, but it didn’t mean someone couldn’t alert the police from the ground and cause a rather undesired chase. He looked down below him at the sheer drop, if he had his discs, he’d see how far the discs recall range was before they didn’t return but alas Tubbo was working on them.

He checked his watch, it was around 12 am, surely there’d be a little less people about at this hour?

He watched as a couple exited a neon decorated nightclub past the side of a store with two dumpsters, unaware of the man that hid behind one of the dumpsters, a pink glow emitting from their palm. Tommy watched as the man’s wallet located in his back pocket was telekinetically removed and floated to the dumpster guy’s outstretched palm, while the pink glow that surrounded the wallet faded.

Pog, some action.

Tommy fell backwards dramatically, angling himself downwards before rotating and shooting towards the back of the store the man had disappeared behind. He landed in a roll, which he somehow managed despite his wings and crouched on the edge of the store roof, listening out for the alleged criminal.

“This guy was stacked,” the guy Tommy presumed did the actual stealing exclaimed as he opened it, the sound of a few coins dropping to the floor evident to it.

“I say if we bet right tomorrow, we could double that,” another voice said.

What was tomorrow?

“On what, that street race?”

“Yeah, heard it’s gonna gather a big crowd.”

“And the police with it.”

“Nah, it’s pretty short and simple, some even booked a night in the Manifold Estate hotel on the side that overlooks the street.”

“Is it the same two racers?”

“Last I heard yeah.”

“What are they racing over now?”

“Pretty sure it was another petty argument of theirs, who knows with those rich folk ‘round here.”

“Hey, Big T, can you get me the street name of the street next to Manifold Estate hotel?”

“Sure, Big Man.”

“Did you hear something, Mike?”

The guy (supposedly Mike) who stole the wallet grunted, *well it was nice getting information from you guys but I'm gonna have to return that now, thanks.*

Tommy dove over the edge, much to the dismay of Mike’s friend if the screech they let out was any indication. Tommy flicked out his baton and slammed into Mike’s shoulder, making him drop the wallet in his hand, though he did try to retrieve it with his ability prior to Tommy slamming his boot down on the man’s outstretched hand. His buddy backed up, kicking stray dirt from the ground towards Tommy, which was sort of pointless considering he was wearing eye protection, well it was pointless until the mini rocks that had been kicked up started to glow pink and repetitively hit in on all sides, with the wallet flying to his buddy’s hand.

Tommy spun on his heel, twisting himself around to land a hit on the other guy’s shoulder crumpling him to the floor as Tommy lunged and grappled with him on the floor. He planted his knee on the man’s back and neatly zip-tied his wrists together, plunking the wallet from his hand, tucking it into his own hoodie pocket.

“You’re no better than us,” Mike hissed as he stumbled to stand, glowering at Tommy.

Tommy almost laughed, “I’m so much better than you.”

He swung his bo staff at the man’s head, rendering him unconscious as he also zip-tied his wrists together. He picked each of them up by their shirts and lifted himself into the air before depositing them out the front of the store in view of the employee inside who would hopefully call the authorities.

Tommy took out the wallet and opened it, looking for some form of identification which he found in the form of a phone number. He walked through the automated glass doors and over to the employee behind the Plexiglass who looked nervously at him.

“Is there a phone I could use?”

The employee nodded warily, pointing over to a phone hung on the wall, he strolled over to it and dialled the number written on the inside of the wallet.

A gruff voice answered, “Bob speaking, what do you want?”

“I collected your wallet from a group of thieves just a few minutes ago and I’m at the service station on Wallace Avenue, I’ll be leaving it with the employee if you want to collect it.”

“A’ight cheers mate.”

The line clicked off so Tommy hung the phone back on its stand and slid the wallet under the glass, “my man Bob should be heading here to collect this, could you mind it for him please?”

The employee nodded, “thanks,” Tommy shot them finger guns before exiting the shop, stepping over the thieves and launching himself into the crisp night air.

His headset came to life once again, “*Chiya Street is the one next to the hotel.*”

“Poggers, thanks, Big T. Could you note that down for tomorrow?”

“*What’s tomorrow?*”

“I overheard there is going to be a street race down that street.”

“*Do you know a time?*”

“Nah, I’ll just have to get there early and play the waiting game.”

“*Sounds good, are you heading back now?*”

“*Yep.*”

“*Cool, just keep a heads up for 404 he was spotted somewhere in the area an hour ago.*”

“*Copy that.*”

Chapter End Notes

- Bella & Roxy are based on two little dogs I met in a country town who were absolute sweethearts.

Chapter 6: Today's Friend is Tonight's Enemy

Chapter Summary

We finally meet Dream :)
Oh, and Fundy- and a few others.

The crew's really getting together now and Tommy finds joy in being cracked at the craft of bullying grown men.

But really, he's still just a child.

Chapter Notes

- Yo, apparently my writing motivation got defenestrated by Tommy recently, but it's back because I love these kids too much.
- Here's a longer chapter to make up for my absence.

TW: Violence

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Beep, beep. Beep, beep. Beep, beep.

Tommy awoke to the sound of a blaring alarm, *fuck*.

“TOMMATHY DANGER CAREFUL KRAKEN INNIT.”

“Don’t kill me!” Tommy screeched as he sprung from the pop-out couch he’d slept on to the alarm, hitting the off switch and dashing out of the room as a very feral looking Tubbo scrambled after him.

Tommy swiped his bag off the counter along with the work clothes he put next to them and ran, rounding the corner and throwing open the door.

“Bye Tubbo, don’t kill Snuffles while I’m gone!”

“Oh, I’m so stabbing that stuffed bird.”

“Pico wouldn’t be happy about that! I’ll get you something from the bakery when I return, ok?”

Tubbo visibly lost some tension, not much- but he took that as a positive, “can you get me a cookie?”

“A whole bag of the finest, Niki-baked Cookies.”

“Alright grudge forgotten.”

Tommy sighed in relief glancing back at Tubbo who still looked positively chaotic, “but if you don’t, I’m feeding Snuffles to the fish.”

Tommy nodded frantically, “got it Big T,” he agreed as he jumped down the building’s stairwell and started running to Little Duckling Café.

Tommy hung up his bag on the coat rack, clothes still tucked underneath his arm as Puffy walked into the backroom, obviously looking for him.

Puffy paused and stared at Tommy, “why are you in your pyjamas?”

Tommy went pale, “Tubbo.”

Puffy sighed, “do I even want to know?”

Tommy shook his head and Puffy turned, heading back into the main café area so he could change into his work clothes, most likely opening without him for the first 5 minutes while he mentally collected himself.

Tommy pushed open the backroom door and stepped into the main area, fully changed into his work attire with his apron neatly tied behind his back.

He glanced up at Puffy who he was surprised to see already taking someone’s order, he thought nothing of the man who was vaguely familiar and switched the tv on.

One of the painfully irritating ads that were constantly on took up the screen before it switched to a red banner across the bottom of the screen.

“*Breaking news*” the reporter announced sitting in her chair behind the curved desk with some form of script most likely sitting on its surface.

“*A drug bust gone south as our heroes were ambushed in the hours prior to the scheduled raid,*” the tv switched to a clip of a smoking warehouse, the clip most likely taken after everything had been sorted out as Tommy didn’t recall seeing any media crew and it didn’t display any shots of him.

Puffy and the man with her both looked towards the screen, “*witnesses report seeing the vigilante Rioter in the area around the same time of the Blade’s appearance to the scene.*”

“*The objective of the raid was still completed despite the chaos brought on the heroes, with the Blade retrieving the illicit substances from a neighbouring building before the operators could flee into the night.*”

“*Stay tuned for more of the most up-to-date news of our city.*”

Tommy scoffed, “how is it ‘breaking news’ if it wasn’t last night, wouldn’t it just be news? Jeez, they need to take another look at the dictionary.”

Puffy stared at him as well as the man (Wilbur, his brain supplied), spoke up, “what do you mean it wasn’t last night?”

Oh, right, that was information the average citizen should know.

“I was um, passing by that area two nights ago and it was smoking?”

“What time did you pass by at?”

“Er, 12am-ish?”

“That couldn’t be right, all fires were put out by 11:20 pm.”

I just bullshitted a time, of course, I know that but how the fuck did Wilbur know that?

“Alright, better question, what were you doing at that time of night away?” Puffy instead asked, glancing at Wilbur almost to say, ‘quit it’.

“Nightly stroll, couldn’t sleep,” Tommy replied, almost too quickly.

Puffy sighed, “kid you’re a magnet for trouble how can you leisurely be taking midnight strolls?”

Tommy shrugged, “haven’t found any yet trouble yet,” *that I couldn’t handle*, he left that part unsaid.

“You still coming around to my place later?”

“You bet.”

“Thank the heavens.”

“You’ll probably need it,” Wilbur added, and Tommy wasn’t sure which part he was talking about, Tommy needing help from the heavens or Tommy not being able to fight- which if that was the case- *you’re at work stop it*.

He’d rather not deal with Puffy’s ‘I’m not mad, just disappointed’ stare if he started a fistfight with a customer.

Tommy grumbled but walked over to the coffee machine, “you ordering anything, o sleep-deprived one?”

“Hey, I bet I get more sleep than someone taking middle strolls near burning buildings.”

The feathers behind his ears flattened and the *insufferable classification of a human*, unfortunately, took notice.

“Did the little birdy not go to bed on time?”

“Wil-” Puffy tried.

“I’m a big man bitch, I don’t have a bedtime, unlike you who should.”

“Do you not listen to your parents when they tell you to go to bed? Aren’t you such a rebellious child,” he practically mocked in a poor attempt of a child’s voice.

Tommy stared him dead in the face as the man smirked, “I’m an orphan, dickhead.”

Wilbur’s face heated up as he sputtered and Tommy took it as a win, “so, certified asshole, what do you want?”

Tommy rummaged around his bag, searching for any food he'd previously stashed away to no avail, "Tommy, what are you doing?"

Puffy blinked at him as he stopped viciously inspecting his bag, "I'm looking for shit I might've packed the other day, Tubbo basically threatened to murder me this morning, so I wasn't able to get any lunch."

"Tommy, you're at a café."

"Oh yeah. I should probably get something to quell the demon too."

Puffy just sighed and let him pass, watching as he scooped out a bag of cookies and a sausage roll, pulling a crumpled 10 dollar note from his pocket.

Puffy put her hand on his shoulder, "on the house, just go eat."

Tommy raised an eyebrow a silent message of, 'you sure?'

"Positive, kid."

Tommy nodded and stepped back into the breakroom, tucking the cookies into his bag and sitting on the uneven chair to eat his sausage roll, holding it above the dogs that tried to 'permanently borrow' his lunch. Though he did give them each a little piece, yielding at the tragically effective puppy eyes.

"Alright you mini children, we're gonna go get you fixed up."

Puffy scooped up Roxy, affectionately giving them pets as she took her coat from the rack and manoeuvred her arms through without putting down the little dog. Tommy picked up Bella, collecting his bag and exiting the store as the white furball tried to blend into his shirt. Tommy locked the door behind him and followed Puffy through the streets in the afternoon sun as they walked to the vet that was just down the street.

The overhanging sign reading, 'Paws for Effect', Tommy huffed out a laugh and rolled his eyes at the name, but he'd give them points for trying.

Puffy entered first, pushing open the door and walking up to the front desk where a fox hybrid sat behind, typing away at their computer.

"Fundy?"

The fox-hybrid perked up at his name, "Puffy?"

"I thought you said you didn't know anyone here?"

"Well, in my defence I didn't know he worked here," Puffy answered looking back at Fundy.

"I do in my spare time," Fundy shrugged, "what can I help you guys with?"

Puffy held up the pupper in her arms as Tommy did the same, "I booked an appointment for the pair yesterday?"

Fundy nodded and typed something on his keyboard, "vaccinations and a cleansing bath for the pair?"

“What’s a cleansing bath?” Tommy inquired.

“For fleas and stuff, why do you think I haven’t let you relocate them into the customer’s area yet?”

“That makes sense.”

Fundy checked the clock on the wall, “you’re welcome to leave them here and collect them in the morning?”

Puffy nodded, “I’ll swing by tomorrow then.”

“So, to start off, do you know any moves?”

“Eh, self-taught a few.”

“How about we do a quick spar first, as a warmup and so I can gauge where you’re at?”

“Fine by me.”

Tommy pulled his arm across him stretching it out, leaning over to warm up his legs, easily touching the floor. He took a stance as Puffy also finished her quick warmup.

She held her hands close to her face and made a ‘come at me’ motion, so he did.

Pushing forward with little to no resistance from the foam mat they were on, he elbowed Puffy in her exposed ribs and jumped back as Puffy collected herself. Clearly, a lot more aware of his speed as she moved away when he lunged forward again, she turned on her heel throwing a hit aimed at his liver area. Tommy blocked, pushing her hand away before catching it and twisting. Puffy grunted but didn’t turn with it easily so Tommy swept the back of her knees, rotating her arms behind her back as she fell and landed on the mat.

“Damn kid what do you do in your spare time?”

Tommy laughed, scratching the back of his neck as he offered his other hand to help her up.

“What do you even need me to teach you, I think you just kicked my ass.”

“Yeah, but you were going easy on me.”

Puffy huffed, “it was meant to be a warmup round, not deck your opponent.”

Tommy shrugged, “I didn’t break any bones.”

Puffy squinted at him, “am I teaching a local crime junkie?”

Tommy shook his head, “no way, I’m not a criminal,” *which was technically half true, even if he was wanted by police for his activities.*

“And I don’t belong to a gang if that’s what you’re thinking.”

Puffy did her signature sigh, “no kid, I’m just a tad concerned about you breaking people’s bones.”

“I haven’t done it in ages, relax,” *ok, that was basically a blatant lie considering he broke*

someone's ribs two nights ago.

"Who's breaking whose bones?" a new voice asked as the door to the training room Puffy conveniently had in her house closed.

"No-one, it's fine, Dream."

"What kind of a name is Dream?" Tommy questioned, turning to the figure entering the room.

"Who's he, new recruit?"

"Hey! I'm right here."

"No, he's not, this is Tommy," Puffy explained.

"*This is Tommy?*"

"Why do you sound like someone talks about me?"

Tommy glanced towards Puffy, "again???"

"How many people do you talk about me to? That's a bit weirdchamp," Tommy continued, shuddering when he thought about how much Wilbur might know about him. Well, he didn't know he was an orphan so maybe not that much.

Dream stepped onto the mat and attempted to put his hand on Tommy's shoulder before Tommy shuffled behind Puffy, "piss off, I don't know you, creep," his ear feathers flattening as he glared at Dream.

Dream chuckled but made no move to touch him, "so what are you teaching him?"

"Well, considering we just had a warmup round and he promptly knocked me to the floor in under 10 seconds I have no idea."

That seemed to take him off guard, "wait really?"

Tommy shuffled under the man's gaze, "what's your power kid?"

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him, "my power has nothing to do with my ability to kick your ass."

"Wanna try?"

"Fuck yeah."

Tommy walked over to the edge of the mat opposite Dream as the man in question put the bag he was carrying on the ground with a *thud*.

"You carrying something dead in there?"

"No, that'd be gross."

"And I'd drop kick you out the front door if you stunk up my training room again," Puffy added.

"Look I said I was sorry!"

"I had to put air fresher in here for a solid week before that awful smell went away," Puffy retorted, lightly kicking his foot.

“What?” Tommy felt so out of the loop here he wasn’t going to lie.

“He threw up from training too hard when I told him to take it easy and recover on his sick day.”

“Bruh, who has that kind of energy?” Tommy knew he was highly hypocritical in saying that considering Tubbo had to physically restrain him when he was sick because he refused to recover when he could be patrolling. Tommy would’ve liked to think he offered good resistance, but he was 90% sure Tubbo was taking pity on him.

Dream shrugged, “apparently I do.”

“Wow, what a sweat.”

“Come at me.”

Tommy rolled his eyes and steadied his stance, “Puffy can you give us a count down?”

“Sure,” Puffy moved between the boys, her arm out “both parties ready?”

A nod came from Tommy, “yup,” Dream grinned.

“Begin,” Puffy moved her arm back, stepping off the mat in the same time it took Tommy to send himself towards Dream, kneeing him in the stomach and bouncing back to avoid the retaliated hit.

“Okay, I get what you m-” Dream couldn’t finish his statement as he blocked a blow at the last moment while Tommy seemed to dance around him, aiming at any unguarded areas and twisting away from attacks directed at him.

As Tommy kept chipping away at his defence Dream subconsciously reached for his ability, his eyes glowing green before he turned, sweeping the kid’s legs as he landed, sending him stumbling forwards.

Dream looked as if he were about to continue before an arm separated the pair again, it was Puffy.

“No abilities,” she ordered as Dream’s eyes lost their glow.

“Imagine having to use your abilities against a literal child,” Tommy poked his tongue out at the latter who only scoffed, though Tommy wouldn’t admit he was a little concerned at Dream’s ability working on him, *maybe it was just a lucky shot?*

“As if you weren’t doing the same.”

“I didn’t use shit on you jackass, imagine being such a sore loser too.”

“Do you not have some form of agility enhancing?”

“Nah it’s all *n a t u r a l* baby.”

“Wait, are you a bird?”

“Y’know it’s rude to condense someone’s amazingly complex avainhood into the simple terms of ‘bird’, so kindly fuck you, Philza would be disappointed in you.”

Dream only laughed at his protests and Puffy joined in, although Tommy felt that it wasn’t at him. Little did he know Philza *had* been disappointed in Dream before on the basis of calling his avainhood just ‘a bird ability’.

“Wanna see how to disarm a knife?” Dream grinned after his laughing fit.

“If Puffy shows me how to do that badass sweeping kick on the ground.”

“No problem kid,” Puffy gave him the thumbs up and moved over to the mat while Dream got out a foam board and a knife that was purely wooden from one of the shelves at the side of the room.

“Tuck your hand there; you want to keep them close.”

Tommy tried again, dropping to the floor and flicking his leg out at the foam mat Dream held, instead accidentally nicking his fingers which was met with a protest of *ow*.

“That’s the fifth time you’ve hit my hand!”

“Hey, he’s doing better than you were.”

“Rude.”

“Take that bitch!” Tommy cheered, dropping faster to the ground and spinning how he’d seen Puffy show him multiple times today.

The foam mat fled from Dream’s hand as Tommy snapped his leg out to it before rotating up and lifting his hands up in celebration, “aw yeah! I’m so pog.”

“Tommy if you keep trying to do that, you’re just gonna get stabbed.”

“It’s a wooden knife.”

“What if it was a real knife?”

“Are you encouraging me to get stabbed in the streets?”

“No!”

Puffy just watched from the sidelines, sending a glare to Dream “you better not be.”

“I just stabbed you there.”

“No, you fucking didn’t, I blocked.”

“You can’t block the blade of a knife with your arm, you’re trying to disarm them, not de-arm yourself.”

“It’s not my fault you’re coming at me so quickly and not letting me move.”

“Then move!”

“Fuck you! I’m gonna move so fast you can’t hit me, bitch.”

“Stop moving!”

“That’s the entire point!”

“Ok, I’m teaching you something, I’m not getting yelled at by you for me doing a good job at not being ‘stabbed’.”

“Hey that’s a bit unfair,” Dream complained as he was knocked to the floor as the round began.

“All is fair on the streets!” Tommy grinned as he got back into position after hitting one of the older man’s pressure points in what he liked to call his signature move, if he was ever rendered weaponless that was.

“Alright, I think this had been a successful enough session,” Puffy clapped her hands together as she scanned over the various fake weapons scattered on the floor and both sparring partners sprawled out on the floor.

Tommy lurched forward, putting his hands on his knees as he sat up, a little too quickly he might add if the black spots that danced across his vision were anything to go by. Puffy held her hand out for him as he pulled himself up, swaying on his feet for a minute held up only by Puffy’s hand on his shoulder.

Dream pushed himself off the ground, “you’d enjoy sparring George.”

“Who’s George?”

“A friend of mine,” Dream answered which garnered a questioning eyebrow raise from Puffy, his face became pink in response.

“I feel like I’m missing something here.” Tommy stated, finally able to see and stand properly.

“Don’t worry about it,” came the reply from the pair and Tommy was left very confused.

Tommy breathed in the crisp night air; he’d managed to find a suitable position to overlook Chiya street from the roof of the Manifold Estate hotel. He flexed his arms out in front of him, *man that was a hard training session.*

Though he was thankful for the session and the promise of more on the following Wednesday, he’d also enjoyed kicking Dream’s ass, even if the win-lose ratio wasn’t actually in his favour he was thoroughly hyped by the prospect of another round. Dream was a harder competitor than most of the thugs he fought in the streets.

He’d arrived at the building top as the clock struck 9:00 pm, this time with discs in his possession and apparently something additional on his headset. Tubbo had explained that he would gain access to nearby hero coms, he wouldn’t be able to talk in them unless Tubbo did something on his end which was rather disappointing. But Tubbo had said it was so they wouldn’t know he was

listening and so his voice wasn't broadcasted to all heroes in range, which again, was a good decision on Tubbo's part.

So far though, he wasn't sure if it was doing what it was supposed to be doing considering he hadn't heard anything all night, but then again, he'd hadn't seen any heroes tonight, besides, it was still early into the night. Typically, wannabe criminals waited until at least 10 pm. Speaking of wannabe criminals, he'd hadn't caught sight of the racers yet and from the lack of skid marks on the ground, he assumed they hadn't swung by yet. However, a few stray people loitered on the streets, money exchanging hands over dealers wanting business in the future crowd or bets on the winner.

It was around an hour and a half later that things started to pick up, many gathering in the streets from the quieter, darker areas though some stood proudly by the road, wanting a better view of the oncoming show. Many of the lights from neighbouring hotels were illuminated as many viewed from a safer place where the police couldn't charge them for anything.

A rev of an engine alerted him to the two vehicles that were rolling in, gathering whoops and cheers from the crowd, one came into view, a cherry red car, its headlights blaringly bright. The next, the red car's opponent he presumed came into view, a sleek black car with neon orange rimmed wheels that appeared to glow, reminding him of a fake fire.

So, now that he saw them, he was faced with the dilemma of: *what the fuck was he supposed to do?*

Turns out, as it was, he didn't need to make the decision as his headset went static before voices could be heard through it.

“All in position?”

“Rodger,” came a strikingly familiar voice.

“I’m nearly there,” another voice answered.

“Oh, hurry up 404, they’re going to start before we can stop it,” the same voice that asked the question squabbled back.

“Pyro give him a break,” the familiar voice sighed, obviously used to and done with the bickering.

“Look your knight in shining armour is here, defending you from the evil, Pyro.”

“You are evil,” 404 replied back instantly followed by an “I’m in position.”

“Great-,” the rev of an engine cut of Pyro, “well fuck.”

“Smiler?”

“On it.”

Are you fucking kidding me, the number 2, 6 and 12 heroes were here too, that’s just poggers.

The flag boy waved the checkered black and white starting flag down as both of the cars hit the gas, launching forward down the street kicking up smoke and loose rubble. Tommy watched as a metal wire shot down, landing most of the way across the street. Causing the cars to swerve to avoid it before they inherently realised they were being chased, which only resulted in them going faster down the street as the crowd roared in excitement.

Tommy spread his wings and fell forward, swooping down the face of the hotel, passing all the onlooking people that were spectating from the snug confines of their hotel room.

“What kind of shot was that?” Pyro complained to the Smiler who’d apparently not landed his shot correctly, *“that’s what the metal wire was, right? .*

“Give me a break, my sparring partner was ridiculous.”

“How ridiculous?” 404 piped up as Tommy spotted a shape weaving through the crowds in a bright blue t-shirt.

“Apparently ridiculous enough that he missed his fucking shot.”

“Oh, he’d kick your ass, Pyro, they were like the devil incarnated,” the Smiler grimaced and Tommy wondered who’d put up that much of a fight against the number 2 hero.

Tommy sent one of his discs flying at the black car’s tyres, keeping lower to the ground than he usually would.

“Is that the Rioter?” the Smiler asked into the coms.

“Affirmative, saw him just fall from Manifold Estate Hotel.”

“What he just fell off the building?”

“Well, more graceful than that but yeah basically.”

Tommy just laughed at their conversation and recalled his disc, having missed by a metre or so. He relaunched one, keeping the green one secured on his wrist *just* in case a hero thought it’d be great to engage with him.

A row of flames emerging from nowhere, spreading across the width of the road in front of the two racers, one drifted, speeding further into the city’s depths while the other went straight through. Tommy shifted his wings, halting himself from hitting the flames and following the red car that continued into the more intricate parts of the city.

Tommy threw another disc, this time managing to snag the bottom of the back right tyre, sending the driver into a spin which they managed to recover from. Driving in a zig-zag down the street, clearly quickly losing pressure in their back tyre which served to slow their speed. Tommy aimed for the other with his available disc as he recalled back the purple disc, naturally, that’s when the bitch struck.

Pyro, well, he assumed from the smell of smoke and unnaturally warm temperatured body that landed on his back, acquainting him with the asphalt. Tommy's cheek grazed the road, his arm that wasn't retrieving a disc protecting his face along with his googles, his hood hadn't come off yet, but his bandana had slid off during his tackle.

Tommy flared his wings and rolled, recalled disc now available for throwing at the hero, which he did, knowing Pyro off his back and allowing him to get air now that the hero had lost the high ground. Pyro sent a wave of flames up at him that Tommy thought he wasn't clear of, but none of his clothes set on fire and he wasn't in any pain. Tommy flipped off the hero before opting to leave him in the dust to follow the car, a shout of protest reaching his ears as he sped off above the road, pushing his bandana back up his face.

Weaving down the street he heard the com go off again, "*lost the bitch, he didn't seem to be affected by my fire though.*"

So that's what it was, he wasn't sure the extent of his fuck-off-powers, though he had burnt himself before. It was why he was banned from the kitchen, at least when Tubbo was home to see the mess he made prior to cleaning up.

"*What about the car?*"

"*... also lost, though I assume they're together.*"

A sigh was heard through the communicator before it went silent, Tommy finding the car again (which was pretty easy from all the smoke and noise) though now he had both of his discs to work with as he played 'how many times do I need to throw this before I hit the other back tyre?'. Pretty fun game.

Turns out, the answer was 3, what could he say? *Third time's the charm.*

The car screeched, turning but ultimately coming to a halt due to both of the rear wheels having deflated. *Pog*. He was glad the red car wasn't one of the weird models that had front wheels that spun the rest, otherwise, he'd have to play his little game again, which was admittedly, pretty dangerous.

A man with a black tank top and jeans got out of the car, a bat slung behind his dirty blonde hair that was styled in a buzzcut. He bared his teeth in challenge and when did Tommy ever say no to a challenge?

He dove from the sky and landed a few paces away from the man, dodging the bat and springing forward. He landed a hit to the guy's gut with the disc still attached to his arm, flinging himself backwards with the aid of his wings as fire came at him again. The man moved out of the way of the flames and Tommy took the distraction to kick the bat from his hands, watching in satisfaction as it skidded away from the racer's immediate range.

Pyro attempted to land a hit on him again, *even though there was a fucking runaway criminal in front of him.*

Tommy dropped to the floor out of the way, flicking his foot out and catching the hero's shin in the move Puffy had taught in only a few hours ago.

"Son of a—" Pyro complained before a message was broadcasted again.

"*Other racer taken care of, we're heading to you,*" the Smiler called over the radio.

Pyro grinned and Tommy rolled his eyes, throwing a disc at him before sliding over to the racer and sweeping his feet as he tried to reach for the bat again. Effectively pinning him down as he used his beloved zip ties to keep the fucker down.

Tommy looked around, seeing the same blue t-shirt from before, however, now that he had a better view, he realised it was the hero 404's costume, designed to fit into a crowd at first glance. If bright blue was a common colour at night that was. Another shadow appeared on the neighbouring building's roof. Tommy wasn't stupid, he knew a losing fight when he saw one. So, he took off.

Out of range for both 404 and Pyro- apparently not the Smiler, if the hook that yanked him from the sky towards the number 2 hero was anything. He hit the concrete roof backwards, rolling up and shaking out his wing to remove the device that snagged him from the sky.

Tommy shot his disc forward randomly as he clasped at the hook with his other hand, yanking it from his wings grunting in annoyance and slight pain. The Smiler extended a bo staff from their tool belt and Tommy snorted, dodging the blow to his torso at the cost of it landing down on his shin above his boot. He pulled his foot away and grabbed onto his returning disc, flicking it out again as the hero ducked, missing his face but hitting the clasp at the back of his head. Knocking the seemingly porcelain mask from his face, which the hero caught but not fast enough.

Tommy stared back at glowing green eyes, eyes that'd he'd sparred with only hours earlier. It was Dream, and maybe if he wasn't still fighting the fucker, he would've had time to revel in the fact that he kicked the number 2 hero's ass, but that would be later. After the adrenaline wore off, or when said hero wasn't trying to send him to either jail or a hospital.

Tommy's moment of hesitation wasn't lost on the hero, Dream surged forward pinning his arms to his side as his back hit the floor, his wings only offering so much padding to the fall. He kept the momentum going, kicking up with his legs and throwing the hero over his head, freeing himself from the hold. He flicked his legs forward, stumbling up, his wings aiding him in not falling back to the ground.

He needed out.

And it came in the form of that fucking metal pigeon.

"Oh Pico, I've never been so happy to see those stupid feathers of yours," Tommy could almost cry as the bird dropped a white round orb into his hand.

"Can I use this in front of 2, 6 and 12?" Tommy asked his headset.

"*Just get out of there,*" Tubbo's voice ordered over the radio.

Dream- no this wasn't Dream, this was the Smiler, reappeared on the roof as Pico dipped into the night, Tommy stared at him before holding his breath and throwing the orb at his feet.

It smashed upon contact filing the immediate vicinity with a cloud of thick white smoke that served a perfect escape opportunity, so he took it. Splitting off from where Pico dipped too, to avoid any heroes chasing Tubbo's beloved child. He heard the Smiler coughing from the roof as he took flight, staying low and out of range before he shot up, climbing higher and higher until he reached the safety of the clouds.

Tommy landed safely on their shared veranda as Pico plopped himself on his shoulder like some kind of discount parrot. He slid open the glass door and promptly shut it, tugging his bandana

down and deactivating his visor. Tubbo rounded the corner and whistled, spurring Pico to fly off, presumably to their charging perch.

Tommy just sighed and stepped towards Tubbo, pulling him into a hug. The adrenaline he was running off before had started to fade, leaving only a pit in his stomach of how close he was to getting either severely injured or caught.

Tubbo wrapped his arms around his back, avoiding the gash from where he'd pulled the hook from.

A quiet whisper was exchanged between the pair, hushed reassurances before Tommy rested his head in Tubbo's curls.

“Thank you.”

Tubbo always had his back and he'd never felt more grateful of that fact.

Chapter End Notes

- *Haha..*, streetracers-
- I love Dream Team interactions, they're so fun to write.

Chapter 7: I Just Spoke to Tommyinnit

Chapter Summary

Tommy is sent home and only comes back to bad news, though, Tubbo could slightly argue otherwise.

“Give me a Philza damn minute!” Tommy exclaimed as he fumbled around his pocket for his notebook while Wilbur only laughed at him. Though he did earn a glare in response from the said teenager.

It had only been a few minutes since the store opened, Tommy opting to open 15 minutes earlier than usual even though his partner wasn’t yet in-store by the looks of it. The hero part of him had also been a little concerned when he’d entered the store to see the teen with a plaster covering the lower left half of his face. But he didn’t know the kid that well and it’d only cause problems if he asked questions, so instead, he made banter. Joking around with the prickly but overall friendly teen.

Tommy just sighed and tucked the notepad back into his pocket, “you want your regular shit show of a coffee?”

Wilbur rolled his eyes, “I got a decent 4 hours last night so I’ll take that down to 2 shots, thanks.”

“Ha, I got 5, bitch!”

“Take another midnight stroll?”

Tommy shrugged, moving over to the coffee machine and pressing buttons that Wilbur didn’t understand, or bother to understand, he only drank coffee when his brain wasn’t functioning so he wouldn’t be able to even make his own. However, as much he argued with Techno he was thankful for the coffee shot before work to get his head into gear.

Another employee exited through the backroom as they tied their plain black apron behind their back, “morning Tommy,” the red head shot finger guns at Tommy before they walked over to one of the tables and started shuffling around some of the chairs, putting the infant chair that was sitting at the table back against the wall.

“Sup Jess,” Tommy answered, finishing up Wilbur’s drink and heading over to his table.

“I heard something about dogs?”

“Oh yeah, they’re currently at the vet, Puffy said she’d pick them up this morning.”

“Named them?”

“Yeah, the little white cloud’s named Bella and the other’s named Roxy.”

“Aw, how small are they?”

“Oh, they’re pretty small, I’m not sure if Puffy’s swinging by today though.”

“She’s at work,” Wilbur piped up as Tommy neared his table.

“Doesn’t she own this café?” Tommy inquired, passing him his drink.

“Yeah, but it’s more like a side hobby.”

Tommy hummed, “it’s like what that pet store owner said.”

“Who?”

“Think he’s name was Fundy?”

“Ah didn’t know he worked there.”

“Neither did Puffy, you also know each other?”

“He’s my cousin.”

Tommy nodded but didn’t make any further comments, Wilbur wondered what Puffy had been telling him as a cover, she did, after all, have friends in high places for a reason.

Wilbur sipped at his coffee, the blend being one of the better cups he’d had in his time and considering it was made by a teenager it put the other places to shame. The steam creating little puffs as he inhaled the coffee bean scent in the air in a tired enjoyment.

His quaint little bubble was burst as he heard Tommy mutter a curse before falling forward, his coffee was forgotten as he moved out of his chair catching him midway to greeting the floor. Wilbur sighed in relief, his fast reflexes only thanks to his years of hero work, he settled him down in the chair across from him.

“You good there, Tommy?”

“Just give me a minute,” he slurred, resting his face against his arm and lying on the table with his eyes screwed shut.

Wilbur glanced to Tommy’s co-worker who stared at him like he was personally responsible for Tommy falling over. Wilbur shrugged but returned his focus to the boy in front of him, crouching next to the chair he was slumped over on. He took Tommy’s arm that was limp beside him and felt for his pulse, nothing irregular there.

“Does this happen often?”

“Usually when I get up too fast,” was the muffled response.

Wilbur stood but hovered close to him, unsure of what to do, he felt as though Tommy was aware of what was causing it but refused to tell him for whatever reason. Maybe because he was just a stranger to him, he’d probably be regarded as an acquaintance at best. Which bothered him for unknown reasons, he sort of felt obligated to help the kid.

Maybe it was because he looked similar to the child, he couldn’t save all those years ago.

His mind hadn’t let him forget since the memory’s resurfacing a few days ago, constant nightmares had plagued him when he returned home from his shifts, many times this week Phil or Techno had spotted him in the kitchen at ungodly hours. Or late-night chats that ended in the comforting hugs from Phil or the rare ones that Techno gave, offering the promise of safety and the message of ‘I’ve got your back, always’. Even though his family assisted him any way they could (and he was

endlessly grateful for it) his sleep schedule had gone to shit.

Hence his early risings to the café.

Truthfully, he wanted a distraction, and the loud employee that was kinder than he let on was perfect for it. The boy was interesting, he was energetic but gave off the vibe he understood the shit of the world. Wilbur couldn't relate more to the second, his job reminded him of it every night but at least he could try and help fix it.

So, he attributed that to the reason he was worriedly standing beside the kid before he blearily looked up at him, the plaster which was more fabric than he originally thought was slightly crumpled at the top and the centre of the padding was blotted with red patches. Wilbur reached into his brown trench coat, pulling another fabric padding as he knelt down in front of Tommy.

“Tommy.”

“Mmm?”

“I won't ask questions about it, but can you at least let me fix that padding on your face?”

Tommy hesitated, staring at Wilbur though it felt more to him like Tommy was staring through him instead. The boy sighed and slowly nodded, lifting a hand to his face. Wilbur caught the hand that went to rip it off, gently detaching it instead, he'd rather not cause more injuries.

Wilbur couldn't help the small gasp that escaped him above seeing the gash across his lower face, covering the majority of his left cheek. Tommy only exhaled but let him wipe away the pooling blood with a stray napkin he was given with his coffee, the previous plaster-like thing obviously hadn't been applied correctly.

“Some asshole threw me on the road,” he muttered quietly, Wilbur wasn't even sure if he truly meant for him to hear it, but he did nonetheless. He resisted questioning him further, but he'd be lying if he said he wasn't the least bit pissed that someone had thrown one of his favourite people on a road.

Wilbur finished padding at the gash, raising the fabric pad to his face and securing it nicely against his cheek. He ruffled the kid's hair before moving back to his chair, hands winding around the warm cup in front of him.

“You good now?”

Tommy faintly nodded, a hand finding the newly applied bandage and gently resting on it.

“You sure you should be at work?”

Tommy shrugged; Wilbur added, “should I call Puffy?”

“She's busy?”

“Eh, work can wait, should you be at home right now?”

“I don't know, probably, Tubbo would get all pissy at me if I'm too bothersome though.”

“Do I need to speak with this *Tubbo*?”

“No, I can manage, I piss him off almost daily, I've only been threatened to be banned from the apartment twice this week.”

Wilbur narrowed his eyes but didn't press them, he pulled a loose paper slip from his coat pocket, scribbling down his number before sliding it over to Tommy, who just looked at it.

"It's my number."

"It's a number for sure."

"It's my *phone* number."

"I gathered that part."

"Did you now?"

"Yeah, I'm not that stupid."

"Put it in your phone then."

"Are you hitting on me?"

Wilbur fake gagged, "no! You're like- 5!"

"I'm 16, bitch."

Wilbur rolled his eyes, "just call me if you need something, okay?"

"Okay...?"

Wilbur huffed, pulling out his phone, "I'm going to go call Puffy."

He brought up his speed dial and below Techno and Phil was Puffy's number, he clicked on it as Tommy grumbled, "she probably won't pick up."

After the first ring sounded a voice answered, "hello, is something wrong, Wil?"

"Yeah, your employee is working when he should be at home."

"Who? Tommy?"

"Yeah, can you tell the little shit to go home?"

"That sounds like him, but yeah, go home kid, I'll arrange someone to join Jess when I can next."

Tommy scoffed, "I'm a big man, I don't need to go home."

"Well, I don't think Wil would call for nothing, so I'm trusting you to get back home safely."

When Tommy didn't reply Puffy spoke up again, "I know you can hear me."

"Alright Puffy, I'll go home," Tommy sighed and Wilbur turned Puffy off speaker and raised it to his ear.

"Can he hear me?"

"No."

"Is he injured again?"

“Again?”

“Yeah, I know it’s concerning but it’s not the first time he’s come to work a little out of shape.”

“Have you looked into it?”

“No, I haven’t been able to, he has no profile, seriously, if he didn’t work at my shop, I wouldn’t even know he existed.”

“That’s a little concerning.”

“Yeah, though I believe he’s staying with my nephew, so I at least know he’s safe for the most part, Tubbo’s a sweetheart they just squabble frequently, a lot like you and Techno actually.”

Wilbur nodded, “mind if I keep an eye out?”

“I’d appreciate it.”

“Alright, see you ‘round.”

“Back at ya, ghost boy.”

The line went silent as Wilbur removed the phone from next to his ear, Tommy raised his eyebrow at him, “Puffy wants me to run some errands later,” he answered, and technically he wasn’t lying.

Tommy nodded quietly; Wilbur guessed he hadn’t given Tommy a reason to question him. He watched the kid get up from the chair, stumbling his way to the backroom door before giving him a two-fingered salute and disappearing from view.

Wilbur phased through the HQ’s training room walls where Puffy was working with a variety of people, some new recruits and some just in for a weekly training session. Puffy spotted his entry as she always did- had a knack for sniffing him out- and waved him over.

“Am I early?”

“Yeah, the meeting’s not until 8, just finishing up here with everyone,” Puffy gestured to the room where each member seemed to be on a different exercise in what looked like a rotational circuit.

“Is anyone else here?”

“A few are waiting in the meeting room if you feel like being social.”

“Eh, I’ll go stalk someone.”

Puffy laughed and waved as Wilbur made himself invisible to everyone, well everyone except the *fucking Rioteer* because of course, they can see him. That was *positively fantastic*, kindly note the heavy sarcasm. Techno seemed to find it hilarious though.

Speaking of his brother, Techno, dubbed *The Blade* was standing in the meeting room awkwardly, his social skills were definitely lacking. Other than him there were only three other people in the room, the Smiler and his apprentice Streak along with one of the four officials of the Hero Association, most likely the one conducting the meeting. Wilbur watched as the man shuffled through countless documents, attempting to order them before giving up and placing them neatly on the table.

They hadn't been informed of the topic of today's meeting, just that all of the top ten heroes had to be in attendance though he could assume the topic since anyone who had information on the vigilante Rioteer was instructed to come along too.

The minutes ticked by, and Wilbur was quite enjoying his brother's antisocial behaviour in the corner, unfortunately for him one of the HQ's secretaries entered who Techno had taken an unusual liking to. Ranboo, he believed his name was, had his signature ink pen and leather book that he practically carried around everywhere with him along with a few notebooks and stray pieces of paper tucked into them. Today he additionally carried a purple portfolio with him, so Wilbur wandered over to behind him, still intangible and invisible to the rest of the room. He skimmed over the contents of the portfolio; it was a profile of the vigilante Rioteer.

Name: Rioteer

Sex: Male

Hair Colour: n/a

Eye Colour: Rumoured to be blue.

Appearance: Red & White Hoodie, Visor, Striped Wings

Weapons: Throwable Disc-like Weapons (Recent), Batons

Ability: Wings

Threat Rating: High

Additional: Name assigned after debut in a free rights movement dated to the 8th of August 2 years ago, when a collection of (now detained thanks to the vigilante's efforts) local gang members targeted members of the rally. Which was on the equal rights of those with powers deemed lesser than by society and those without abilities all together. These rallies were in a series called 'Project Unify' and caused discrimination based on abilities or lack thereof to be legally acknowledged as a federal crime that both people and businesses can be persecuted for.

Wilbur narrowed his eyes at the information, *that really wasn't much to go off*, though the rally information was interesting.

"Is everyone here?" the official asked, doing a slightly audible headcount.

"Where's Phantom?" Totem asked, looking towards Captain.

"Stop being a dick," Puffy sighed, not at all surprised when he appeared next to Techno and Ranboo, visibly scaring the latter while Techno sent him a glare that said, 'you've been here the whole time haven't you and didn't help me?'. He met said glare with a grin, he had indeed. He received a swat to the back of the head in reply.

"Boys," Philza warned from across the meeting room table.

The pair straightened out immediately getting a response of quiet laughter from around the room. Wilbur went slightly pink (though it thankfully couldn't be seen due to his translucent, colourless state) and only side glared at Techno.

"As many of you might've guessed this meeting is about the vigilante Rioteer," the official started and Wilbur felt Ranboo stiffen the slightest amount next to him, something that he would've missed if he hadn't been trained to pick up on the smallest of cues and changes in body language.

"Ranboo if you could," the official looked towards the secretary who shuffled around with the

portfolio and walked around the room, handing out the rather empty sheet of paper to everyone.

“This isn’t much to go off?” 13 piped up, turning over the sheet questioningly.

“Yes, and he’s been allegedly around for 2 years so far if the account provided is in fact correct,” the officer answered.

“No one’s seen him in 2 years?” 13 inquired, seemingly unsure of how such a vigilante could do such for so long.

Wilbur knows he should speak up, he should correct them, tell them that the Rioteer has actually been on the streets for 5 years. Which is concerning in itself, but what’s more concerning is that Wilbur can’t find it in himself to do it. Even though it’s his job he can’t help but keep his word to the vigilante, who he’d only interacted with once over those said 5 years. *Of course, he’d have to make a promise with a vigilante of all people.*

If anything else came up though, it was fair game from here on out.

The officer nodded wordlessly, ceasing their rearrangement of notes as they pulled a piece of paper from the pile, “this is the first witness report of someone of the vigilante’s appearance, though it can’t completely be confirmed to have been him. It’s dated to the 8th of August two years ago.”

“Have you got any footage of this vigilante?” Kitsune inquired, idly twirling a kunai as they sat at the table (being one of the very few actually seated).

“Not that we’ve gathered or can confirm, unfortunately,” they replied, clearly bothered by the lack of information on one of the most wanted vigilantes in the city that the public had grown to love from their community service.

“I believe he’s been caught on camera before,” Wilbur begrudgingly added, he had to do some of his job he supposed, “I’m unaware of where though so your guess is as good as mine.”

“Source?” the officer raised their eyebrow.

“By the vigilante himself, mentioned something about dropping things off, implying he’s caught on camera when he does it,” Wilbur elaborated.

Philza’s eyes widened, “I’ve been informed by a familiar of mine that he frequents one of the police stations in my more commonly patrolled district.”

“So, you’d have an idea of where he’d be?” the officer inquired.

“To some extent.”

“Would you accept the assignment of gaining more information on the vigilante in hopes of bringing him down, or just trying to bring in regardless?”

“I can always see what I can do, though I assume I’d hold an advantage over majority here.”

Philza paused and backed up a little, “not that I think that I’m better than anyone here it’s just,” he gestured to his wings, “I can fly.”

Techno snorted at Phil as he went a little pink from embarrassment, “we know what you mean,” Wilbur added though he’d say Phil was definitely one of the more talented and qualified heroes for the job.

Captain shared a quiet laugh with Combustion as she looked over at Philza whose feathers had slightly puffed up at the attention.

“I have you know Mr Philza that I landed on him last night so I’m not that disadvantaged,” Pyro commented while the Smiler elbowed him jokingly.

“Yeah, and you lost him too,” 404 added.

“Still got him to the road, better than you,” Pyro retorted.

“Well yeah, at least we apprehended the racer.”

“So did I!”

“Only after you lost him again *because you couldn’t fly!*”

Wilbur watched as Dream just stared at his friends a mix of ‘you’re both idiots and why am I friends with you again?’ present on his features even though his face was covered by his mask. Wilbur had been around the younger long enough he could read him fairly well.

“Could you guys chill?” 13 sighed as they interrupted the next insult at the other.

Pyro glared at 13 with no real anger behind it, “you’re just saying that because you feel left out and haven’t seen Rioteer on patrol.”

“No, I’m saying it because you’re only making yourself look bad at losing to a vigilante twice when they were outnumbered.”

“Hey, as if you could do better!”

“My tournament position this year seems to disagree,” 13 grinned back and Wilbur faintly recalled them kicking Pyro’s ass in the tournament the hero association held each year to determine hero rankings for that year.

It was a well looked forward to event that had a multitude of different events spaced out over the duration of a week (to make sure there were still heroes out patrolling during the day when it was held), members of the public crowded in the stadiums as heroes duelled each other in different challenges, some being team-based others being solo-based. Solo challenges and duels were more common the higher the hero placed with the top two being determined by a duel between the top two highest placing heroes at the end of the week. Wilbur thoroughly enjoyed teaming up with Techno and leaving everyone in the dust with laser tag, Totem’s look of surprise when appeared from nowhere was priceless.

“Yeah, that’s just because you’re a fucking sweat.”

“Not as much as you are-”

13’s protest was cut off as the officer coughed, regaining the attention of the room (though two members still stared at each other, probably having a staring contest now if Wilbur knew either of them).

“Today’s meeting is successful, and I believe we’ve covered everything needed,” it was a question to the rest of them, one that was met with silence.

“Excellent, you may go do as you please, meeting adjourned,” they announced though pausing and

gesturing Philza over.

Kitsune slightly nudged 13 as he was getting up, causing the other to blink and Pyro to raise his hands victoriously, “ha I win!”

“I call interference! I want a rematch!” 13 protested.

“Nope!” Pyro grinned, collecting his bag from its position hooked onto one of the chairs.

“You two act as if you’re five I swear,” 404 grumbled as he headed out with the Smiler who only chuckled at the comment.

“Oh, shut it Gogy,” Pyro complained, earning a punch in the arm in response.

“Stay still Tommy!”

Tommy was trying, he really was, it’s just the shit Tubbo was putting on his wings was tingly in all the wrong ways, and he just *really* wanted out right now.

“This is the last one I need to treat, ok? It’s necessary so they don’t get infected, and don’t complain, it was obviously leaving you so out of it someone forced you to go home.”

Tommy groaned, flexing his wing but not shaking the bandages off from where they covered the areas where he’d been dragged against the concrete, or asphalt, or something of the sorts or the fact he’d been fucking grappling hooked out of the sky. His wings hadn’t taken a liking to that and quite frankly neither had he, he wasn’t fond of being dragged around on the floor or out of the sky.

He shifted around when the door of the apartment clicked close and Ranboo entered the living room, clearly surprised to see Tommy home.

“Aren’t you still supposed to be working for a few more hours?”

“Nah I got sent home 15 minutes into my shift.”

“Ah, well, I have some news from the HQ.”

“Share your secrets, Big Guy,” Tubbo answered from his position on the couch, laying bandages on Tommy’s outstretched wings.

Ranboo pulled a notebook from his suit’s pocket, flicking over to a certain page where writing Tommy couldn’t read (due to its fanciness) scribbled across the page.

“Today there was a meeting about a *certain* wanted vigilante,” Ranboo explained, and Tommy immediately paid more attention turning to meet the teleporter’s gaze.

Ranboo shuffled awkwardly and broke eye contact, reading from his notes, “the information they have formally recorded is limited with them only knowing this,” Ranboo pulled another piece of paper from his pocket, laying it on the table as he strode to in front of the couch instead of behind it. He set a portfolio of the vigilante Rioteer on the table.

“Ha, they rated me as a high-level threat!”

“That’s not much information for them to go off,” Tubbo commented, glancing up at Ranboo who nodded, “and the ‘Rioteer’ name thing was more of the publics doing, I still have no idea how the

hell no one managed to film you during that entire thing.”

“More was given during the meeting,” Ranboo set his gaze on Tommy who shifted.

“If it’s the fact I like soup it was in trade for the Blade not stabbing me, so I’d say worth it.”

“You need to keep me more updated I swear,” Tubbo grumbled, knocking Tommy’s side with his foot.

“*What?* No, that wasn’t it. The Blade didn’t mention anything actually. The fact that you were caught on cameras was actually the one brought up,” Ranboo acknowledged.

“Did they mention where?” Tommy raised an eyebrow.

“They narrowed it down to a police station in Philza’s area.”

“Fuck,” Tommy cursed, “I chose there because they’re independent from the hero association so the cameras wouldn’t be actively reported on.”

“Well, it did take them a bit of thinking to connect it, with both input from Phantom and Philza.”

Tommy grunted before perking up, “Philza??”

“Oh, I’ve got some great news for you,” Ranboo stated, “and please, heavily note the sarcasm.”

Tubbo just sighed, “what’s gone wrong now?”

“They’ve set Philza on gathering information and if he can, detain duty.”

“*WHAT?!*” was the collective reply from the duo.

“*That’s so cool but fucking hell! He’s got wings and eyes everywhere!*” Tommy all but shouted.

Tubbo just sighed into his hands, muttering to himself some of which Tommy caught was ‘what did I do to deserve this?’ and ‘why me?’ though the complaints ceased as Tubbo shot up with a glint in his eye.

“*I’m gonna make fucking birdseed bombs!*”

Somewhere, on the familiar journey home from the air, a hero shuddered. One of his companions cawing at him in question, to which he shrugged, “no idea mate- but I feel like I’m going to have to deal with a lot of shit soon.”

Chapter 8: Forgive Me If I Stumble

Chapter Summary

Wilbur escapes to his favourite Cafe and Tommy makes Tubbo ever-so-slightly regret some of his life choices.

TW: Descriptions of a Panic Attack

Chapter Notes

- As of currently this is my favourite chapter, *I love Tommy bullying adults*

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Since all the talk of the vigilante Rioteer's supposed heightened activity, there'd been fairly little to no word of the vigilante in the recent week after Philza's assignment to the vigilante's case. Wilbur hadn't seen so much of a blur of the vigilante and while they'd managed to fly (quite literally) under the radar for so long he felt that it wasn't just the case of silent activities. Though he pushed it to the back of his mind as the corner shop café came into view, a smile found its way to his face.

He'd been visiting daily, talking to Tommy for roughly an hour with the exception of last Thursday when he'd forced the kid to take it easy and go home. It was currently Friday, and Wilbur couldn't wait for the weekend break, even though he couldn't spend it with his family as they were both working, Phil trying to find traces of the vigilante and Techno busy with a new drug floating around that was rumoured to prevent usage of abilities.

He pushed open the café door before he realised he'd walked up to it, blinking the sleep from his eyes he glanced up at Tommy who was behind the front counter, filing out the shop displays with countless treats with a new additional glass jar on the counter filled with dog-shaped biscuits. A label wrapped around the jar that read, 'do no eat, for furry friends only', with a dodgy smile tacked onto the end of it drawn in a different coloured marker.

He quietly laughed; he should get one for Fundy.

"Morning Wil, still early as ever, fucking weirdo. Regular order?"

Wilbur grinned, "morning to you too, and yeah, though can I add one of your new delicacies to the list?"

"You do realise you can't eat them, well actually- you could probably try just don't complain to me if you feel like throwing up afterwards."

Wilbur rolled his eyes but thanked him nonetheless, as the teen scooped one out of the glass jar and placed it on a napkin. Wilbur took it, tucking the biscuit in the napkin before putting it in one of his coat's many pockets.

“How much crap have you got in there?”

Wilbur shrugged, leaning on the counter as he watched Tommy go through the practised motions of working the coffee machine, hitting all the buttons and powering it up for the extended use over the morning hours. Business was still proceeding as usual and the news of the café’s attempted robbery did little to hinder customers returning, many regular patrons dropping by to say hello and contribute to their flourishing community.

Jess walked through the backdoor, a crate of bagged goods in her arms as she shot her almost customary glare at him before setting the crate on the counter, beginning to unpack the baked goods.

“Has Niki already dropped by today?” Wilbur asked, having arrived slightly later than his usual 5:45 time slot.

“Wouldn’t you like to know, weather boy,” Jess answered, midway through unloading the bread items on the shelves above the counter.

Tommy only laughed at Wilbur’s sigh before humouring him with a “yes.”

Wilbur just looked at the pair, taking the time to quickly scan Tommy’s face before the younger commented that he was being weird. He was glad to see that the scab on the lower left half of his face was healing well and if it continued that way shouldn’t scar.

Wilbur watched as Tommy steadied himself on the counter, tending to the machine once again, it really was magic, he had no idea how that fucking piece of metal worked.

Tommy slid his cup over to him a few seconds later, “thanks,” he took a sip before being swat in the head lightly, “how the fuck can you drink that?”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s like 65°C” (149°F)

Wilbur just shrugged, taking another sip, “I burned off my taste buds long ago.”

“You’re not that old.”

“How do you know that? I could be an 80-year-old in disguise.”

“Because you have the emotional maturity of a 10-year-old.”

“That’s rich coming from you.”

“I am mighty rich, plus, you’re like 24 that’s not old.”

“Who told you that?”

“Puffy.”

“Should’ve seen that coming.”

“What are you doing tomorrow?”

“Wil, we’ve talked about this, are you sure you’re not hitting on me? That’s a bit weird.”

“Tommy for the love of-”

“Philza,” Tommy interjected, “say it correctly, for the love of Philza.”

“For the love of Philza,” Wilbur repeated... slowly.

“Thank you.”

“I will leave.”

“Do it, pussy.”

Wilbur placed his head on the table, he just might cry at this point he only wanted to ask if the child was free.

“Man, you’re having a rough one,” Jess commented from where she was preparing the only other customer in the store’s drink.

Wilbur flipped her off and lifted his head to look at Tommy, “do you want to come to the park with me tomorrow?”

Tommy looked at him, “are you-”

“If you say hitting on you- I’ll call Puffy.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“I would.”

“Rude, but no, I was going to say are you lonely or something?”

Wilbur just quietly screamed into his hands; he could faintly hear Jess laughing at him from the counter.

“Honestly, let’s just go with yes at this point.”

“Alright.”

Wilbur slumped his shoulders and stood from his chair, he sighed, “forget I mentioned it alright? I get its weird, but I literally work with children.”

Tommy jabbed him in the shoulder, “don’t get all edgy with me, I already agreed to come with you.”

Wilbur perked up, “Hatten’s Corner Park, 9 o’clock?”

Tommy shrugged, “got nothing better to do.”

Tommy sat on the living room couch; it was late afternoon but far too early for him to be doing his nightly activities. Tubbo was somewhere, probably either plotting murder or building some form of weapon- if it was a bomb, he wouldn’t be surprised.

Ranboo was most likely in the kitchen, stress baking something or other, he’d been flat out with

paperwork the past week and Tommy had a sneaking suspicion that it was due to the sudden assignment of his case to Philza who he'd been informed prior liked to do his research. Tommy had felt a little guilty for the ender-hybrid's increased workload, so he'd taken to making sure that their more commonly used ingredients were consistently in stock. Though he if was ever asked on the subject he'd heavily deny it.

Tommy's wings were draped over the back of the couch, he didn't have any bandages on them anymore, hence his easing back into his vigilanism after taking a week's break to let them heal after Tubbo threatened to murder snuffles if he did something stupid while in recovery.

He fumbled around his pockets, idly turning them inside out before his hand found a crumpled piece of paper, a poorly written string of numbers written on it, *it was Wilbur's*.

He wasn't sure what prompted the decision in his brain, but he took out his phone and typed the number in, hitting save in the top right corner.

Wilbur
5 am sleep deprived man child
Message, Call, Video, Mail
8008 420 069

“I bet this is a mistake but fuck it.”

He got up to go get changed into his clothes for tonight- and promptly dropped his phone, barely catching it before it hit the tiled part of the kitchen floor at the side of the couch.

Calling Wilbur (5 am sleep deprived adult child)...

Tommy groaned, definitely a mistake as he shook out his wings, fully intended to hang up-

“Hello? Who is this?”

Oh, fuck he actually picked up.

“Um, no-one.”

“Tommy?”

Shit, mission abort.

A laugh came from the line, “you actually called.”

“Look Wilby I-”

“Did you just call me Wilby?”

“No-”

“Did you just fucking call me Wilby?”

“Look dickhead, I accidentally called you, okay?”

“Aw, are you embarrassed because you called me Wilby?”

“I did not call you fucking Wilby.”

“Aww, Tommy, you can call me Wilby if you want.”

“Shut up, I did not call you Wilby, and I won’t be calling you Wilby any time soon.”

Tommy stomped to the shared room, this conversation was clearly a mistake (well, it actually was). He pulled his ~~hero~~ vigilante clothes from where they were tucked under his bed (read the pop-out couch’s mattress). Stubbing his toe as he pulled his toolbelt from the confines of where he’d stuffed it previously, muttering a curse as he shook his foot out.

“You good, Tommy?”

“Mm, I’m *great*, how are you, Wilbur?”

If Tommy was paying more attention, he would’ve caught Wilbur’s bewilderment but as it was, he was struggling to fasten his combat boots to his feet.

“I’m okay... are you okay Tommy?”

Tommy made a noise of comment, mostly in victory of securing his boots.

“Are you doing something?”

This time he did respond, “yup, I’m getting ready.”

“For what?”

“Nunya.”

“...nunya?”

“Nunya business.”

“I swear to go- *Philza*, Tommy.”

“Nice save.”

“Thank you, but that’s not the point.”

“What’s the point other than I accidentally called you?”

Tommy finished changing, hooking his toolbelt to his waist and heading to their hobbies room where all weapons were kept.

“So, you only accidentally called me?”

“Yeah.”

“...how’d you even do that? Wait- that means you put my number in your contacts!” he could practically hear Wilbur’s smile in his voice.

“I’m just going to leave you there- bye bye Wilbur.”

“Tomm-”

The line went silent as Tommy hit 'end call', he had stuff to do that meant he wasn't going to deal with Wilbur's teasing currently. Even if he did slightly feel bad for hanging up on him.

Tommy felt the wind flutter through his feathers as he sat on a random building's roof, he believed the store below him was some kind of flower store, owned by a small brown-haired boy with a bee hybrid ability. He remembers awkwardly taking a photo of the store (with the boy in the background) due to Tubbo demanding he see the person Tommy wouldn't stop comparing him to, declaring that he was the more original one.

He shifted his attention away from his remising, scouting the sky for hints of movement or potential wind drafts he could catch, what did catch his attention was the rolling grey clouds flowing in from the horizon. The wind was rather harsh tonight, and it was early so Tommy could only assume that rain would be upon the city's outer regions sooner or later. He'd rather not get caught in that, flying in rain was difficult, he could manage for a while before his wings became too heavy and he was forced to resort to walking (with his wings tucked away even though he was in his vigilante gear, which was a risk, but they were far too much to be dragging around on the floor as he made his way home).

A stray pamphlet found its way through the breeze, landing near his feet, he managed to catch a few headlines before it was whisked away again in the steadily increasing wind.

'404 and Smiler seen together frequently, are they just friends as they say or more?'

'Manifold Estate set to excel in the yet another industry, many are wonderous to the company's rapid success.'

'Pyro vs Rioteer in the streets, where will their next showdown be?'

The last one intrigued him but alas the paper had drifted away, lost to his keen eyes, he sort of understood why people got addicted to those kinds of click-baiting magazines.

Though, as it always seemed to be Tommy's attention was dragged to something else a few moments later, his hearing focusing on the sound of someone's laboured breathing. He was never one to stand by, so he lifted himself in the air (which was rather easy considering the wind) and surveyed the numerous areas around him.

A yellow sweater, partially covered by a haphazardly worn light brown trench coat greeted his eyesight in the folds of the shadows near the side of a currently closed convenience store (which wasn't very convenient if it was closed at only 10 pm). As he lowered himself closer, he took a better look at the person slumped against the wall, head in the hands as they seemingly struggled to breathe... was that... *Wil*?

Curse that fucking birdbrain of his.

His feathers fluffed but he forced them down, he'd really rather not scare his friend off even if Tubbo did reckon it just made him look puffy and soft. Criminals seemed to shit themselves when he did it occasionally so he'd really rather not. He dropped down, out of view but still on ground level and Wilbur must have really been out of it to not have noticed him as he stepped through the shadowy side area of the shop.

It was only when he was a few metres away from him that Wilbur looked up, his breathing was still off, panicked almost and tear tracks had dried on his face. He looked like shit, but Tommy

wanted nothing more than to give him a hug. Though he'd never say that aloud.

"Who—" Wilbur's voice cracked but he continued nonetheless, "who's there?"

Tommy stepped into a lighter area closer to him, raising his hands to try and convey he meant no harm.

"It's you," Wilbur breathed though it came out in a series of shaky breaths.

Tommy nodded, hands still raised, "can you breathe with me?" he asked, eyes acutely aware of Wilbur's trembling hands and glossed over eyes.

Wilbur managed to slowly nod, and Tommy inched closer, crouching down about two metres from his and counted with him.

"Breath in, one."

Tommy watched as Wilbur tried to take a singular breath, stumbling but continuing nonetheless.

"Out, two."

Tommy exhaled, Wilbur exhaled on his second breath, slower than the first.

"In, three."

"Out, four."

"In, five."

Wilbur managed to collect a single breath with him and Tommy smiled softly under his bandana.

"Out six, in seven. . ."

The pair continued, Wilbur's breathing slowly but surely evening out with Tommy's, his eyes became more focused and he'd started to look over at him instead of the concrete floor.

Tommy shuffled forward, a hand outstretched to him, "the floor doesn't look all that comfortable," he commented eliciting a quiet exhaled laugh from the other.

Wilbur, after a moment of hesitation, took his offered hand as Tommy pulled him up, he stumbled a little before Tommy steadied him by gently resting a hand on his shoulder. Wilbur only stared at him as Tommy pulled his coat back onto his shoulders, brushing the dust off his shoulders in his brain's way of preening (though he didn't know that, *Tommy didn't even know how to preen his own wings-* hence the annoying showers with the addition of wings to try and get the dust out).

Wilbur caught his hand as he brushed off his sleeve, Tommy flinched and attempted to retract his hand muttering an apology, but Wilbur shook his head, "where'd you get this from?" he asked, pointing to a jagged scar that ran across Tommy's palm to his wrist.

Tommy allowed Wilbur to turn his hand over inspecting the scar, "got it from a run-in with a particularly nasty escapee," he spoke calmly, very different to his usual energy or the frantic talk mode he'd entered when he fought with that particular criminal which he'd gotten it from. He usually didn't see it on patrols- *he forgot his gloves*, must've been from the conversation with the not-quite-the-same-Wilbur from before. That one that was loud and teased him, not the one he'd found in the midst of a panic attack on the floor behind some random store.

Wilbur nodded, "the one with the spike ability?"

“That’s the one.”

“That was you who brought them in?”

“Yup, quite proud of that one, I’m lucky to have only gotten a small scar from the encounter though.”

“Did it hurt?”

Tommy grunted, “like a bitch.”

Wilbur let Tommy’s hand go and it returned to his side, he tapped at his side in thought, an idea slowly piecing itself together in his head.

“Yo T, can you hook numbers to the radio?” Tommy asked through his headset, mindful to not include his normal mannerisms that Wilbur would most certainly pick up.

“*As in so you can answer a call from one on your headset?*”

“Affirmative.”

“*I believe I can make that a possibility, why?*”

“I want to set someone’s to it; can you create a callable variable?”

“*I can do that, give me a second.*”

“Thanks, T.”

Tommy shifted his attention to one of Wilbur’s pockets where he knew he kept his phone, “may I have your phone for a second?”

Wilbur narrowed his eyes at him, “how do I know you won’t fly away with it.”

“I could’ve done it already, it’s in that pocket,” Tommy jabbed a finger towards his upper right pocket where Wilbur slowly pulled his phone from, hesitantly handing it over to him.

Tommy just raised his eyebrow, “I don’t know your password man.”

“Oh yeah,” Wilbur unlocked it, the screen unlocking to a page in his contacts.

Tommy
Gremlin Child
Message, Call, Video, Mail
2021 666 707

Wilbur quickly closed it and opened a new contact, “Is this what you want it for?”

Tommy nodded taking the phone and typing in the string of numbers Tubbo recited to him, it wasn’t a phone number, but it was callable, so it worked, after he saved it, he returned the phone to Wilbur, “give it a go.”

Rioteer

Amazing, Brave & Awesome

Message, Call, Video, Mail

01010111 01101000 01111001 00011001 01100100 00100000 01111001 01101111 01110101
00100000 01110100 01110010 01100001 01101110 01110011 01101100 01100001 01110100
01100101 00100000 01110100 01101000 01101001 01110011 00111111

Wilbur didn't comment on the 'company' box that everyone basically used for irrelevant reasons (like insulting friends in their contacts) and hit 'call'.

Tommy's eyes lit up behind the glass of his visor as his headset rung, 'unknown number calling'. Tommy clicked a button on his headset and the line opened, Tommy grinned as Wilbur looked bewildered at the success of the call. Tommy clicked another button and the line went silent, Wilbur's phone displaying 'call ended' before flicking back to his home screen.

"Can you name the number 'corner store guy'?"

"Sure... do you actually know this random person that you gave access to your headset?"

"Yeah, I do, I'll fill you in later."

Tommy caught Tubbo's sigh through the line before it went silent, *man the doubt this bitch was exhibiting.*

"So... do you give out your number- code- whatever that was, to anyone on the streets...?"

Tommy shook his head, "nah, just you."

"Why?"

"Can't say."

"Identity reasons...?"

"Bingo, also a friend of mine would be pissed if they knew you've spoken to me so can we keep this on the down-low?"

The last bit was a lie, but he assumed if Dream somehow got wind of Wilbur's interactions through the grapevine, he'd be most certainly interrogated, and he'd rather not stress Wilbur out more than he already appeared to be daily.

"Ok... I can.." Wilbur released a breath, "I can agree to that."

Tommy gave him a thumbs up, "can you make it home safely from here?"

Wilbur nodded, "I assume you have a job to do?"

Tommy shot him a grin (though Wilbur couldn't see it), "I'll see you 'round, and call me if you ever need to!"

He flapped his wings, disturbing a thin layer of dust on the ground as he made his way into the sky, flying out of Wilbur's view before shifting himself and landing above him. There was no way he could leave without seeing Wilbur go home safely, as a friend he couldn't and as an avian he certainly couldn't either, it would drive him up the wall.

So, instead, he followed from afar, watching out for danger on Wilbur's behalf though the other seemed to be doing the same just fine. He trailed behind on buildings for a few blocks and a few blocks became a few main streets (which he'd usually avoid, that's how much it was bothering him), then he checked his surroundings closely. He'd travelled through 3 other districts and was now in district 1.

Not a great district to be in if you were a vigilante, hero patrols were frequent, well, it made sense-*considering he was right in front of the hero HQ building.*

Tommy tucked himself behind a billboard sign, advertising something about a luxury beach with moon jellies scattered in the water. He scanned the streets for Wilbur, who was easy to find walking straight up to the Hero Association's Headquarters (also called HAH), he stopped in front of the glass sliding doors. Tommy could make out the shape of Wilbur's phone in his top pocket before Wilbur took it out, turning it over slightly prior to shoving it in another inside compartment in his coat, one Tommy had been unaware of.

He really hoped Wilbur wasn't planning to give away his information, but a quiet voice in his head told him that Wilbur was here for other reasons. He'd rather listen to that voice.

He stayed, motionless on the stand of a billboard, watching.

“You know staring is rude.”

PHILZA FUCKING MINECRAFT

Tommy turned; feathers fully fluffed up from being startled as he leapt back from the stand's side he was clinging onto. Tommy's ear feathers flattened in irritation at the figure in front of him as he narrowed his eyes, “so is scaring the shit out of someone, Phantom.”

The ghostly figure only laughed, the sound reverberating unnaturally around them, “yeah, go ahead and laugh, prick,” Tommy complained, smoothing his feathers down with his hands and remembering his last encounter with the same hero. One where he also scared Tommy with his ‘I come from nowhere and make no noise’ abilities, *oh and the fact he looked dead- y’know with the whole being dead ghost thing.*

“You really need to get a better entry move,” he commented.

Phantom shrugged, “at least I have a catchphrase.”

“Well, I highly doubt that catchphrase of ‘going ghost’ works in this situation.”

“Better than nothing.”

“Next time I see you I’m gonna have the best fucking catchphrase.”

“Can’t think of one on the spot?”

“I’d rather not pick some boring-ass one like yours.”

“Hey! ‘Going ghost’ is a great one.”

“Sure, and blueberries are blue.”

“They are blue though...?”

“They’re fucking purple you heathen!” Tommy lifted himself up, perching on the top of the

billboard to sit above discount Casper the ghost that had the fashion sense of a military personnel if the over-the-top trench coat was anything to go by (at least Wilbur's was somewhat fashionable).

Phantom shrugged, "depends how colour blind you are," he laughed at the end of his comment.

"You thinking of someone?"

"You didn't hear this from me, but if you ever have the chance wear a yellow version of the Smiler's outfit."

"Why yellow?"

"A colleague of mine can't tell it well from green."

"Oh damn, that bad?"

"Yup, why do you think he wears blue so much?"

"That's true, he did stand out in that crowd a few days ago, wait you are talking about 404, right?"

Phantom just rolled his eyes and made a motion of putting his finger to his lips.

"Duh, also that reminds me, didn't you have a brawl with Pyro recently?"

"*Potentially*, fucking hate that guy, he ruined my feathers for a solid week!"

"Thought you were immune to fire?"

"I was to his, but roads hurt, man."

"Valid point."

Tommy looked around as the breeze picked up, becoming aware of the fact he was still in the number one hotspot area for heroes, "y'know, it's been great chatting and all, but I probably should go, so- um, have a great night!"

He did a two-fingered salute and tossed himself into the updraft, rising easily above the buildings and into the overhead cloud cover. The hero below him could only watch as he became a spec in the sky before being hidden by surrounding clouds, it was disappointing, but Phantom had no intent to try and apprehend him- tonight at least.

If Tommy happened to be walking past a comic store later that night, he would tell Tubbo that he saw nothing of interest aside from the few cooler front covers. But if Tubbo happened to pick up he was lying and pressed him for answers he'd tell him that in reality, he saw a book. An old one sitting in the front window, a car and a driver on the cover and in small print, it read, 'Let's fuck some shit up'.

So, if he took his new catchphrase from there it would be only his and Tubbo's secret, Phantom wouldn't have to know he'd seen a cool cover with an even cooler quote.

Wilbur phased back into the HQ's building, walking over to the changing rooms that were basically customised vaults. He walked into a hallway, doors closing behind him as he came across

a hand-scanner which he placed his hand on.

“*Welcome, Phantom.*” The overhead speakers said in a clear but robotic woman’s voice.

The door ahead of him slid open, revealing another corridor where he found his own room, in which he’d left his casual clothes in contained sealed boxes that slid back into the wall when out of use. He closed the door to his room, putting his gadgets back into their neat, black foamed boxes before pushing the boxes back in.

As he changed into his casual clothes, he put his usual trench coat back on, checking if his phone was still there, which it was. He took it out of the compartment it was in, turning it over and relooking at the contact labelled ‘Rioteer’, it wasn’t a dream then.

He sighed, there was so much information they didn’t know about this vigilante and then the damn guy goes and throws this at him. What was he supposed to think about it? And apparently, Wilbur knows a friend of the guy??

The whole encounter left him confused, but he was thankful for the assistance, he’d really rather not have been approached by some *less* friendly company.

Wilbur sighed and tucked the phone away again; he’d maybe leave the whole encounter out of his conversation topics with Phil. He wasn’t even sure if the vigilante was acting normal when he’d helped him by that corner store, the entire time it felt as though they were on guard, both assessing him and assessing their surroundings. His brain had made the connection to comparing his behaviour to that of a mother bird, though that was more along Phil’s area with how he got when either he or Techno were sick or injured. But there were definitely similarities between their behaviour, probably because they were both birds or something, he had no idea.

Wilbur just shook his head, he could ponder over it later when he got home, for now, he finished packing his gear away and stepped out of his room. Casting a wave to Fundy who’d emerged from his own changing pod, a tired nod was the fox-hybrid’s response as they exited the changing hallway into the main training room area.

Puffy was there in her training gear, setting up rotations, changing the set-up from how it’d been yesterday.

“Morning Puffy,” Wilbur yawned, he should probably get some sleep before meeting up with Tommy today.

“Morning Wil, Fundy,” Puffy smiled, tugging a thick brown woven rope into place, securing it around one of the floor’s support pillars.

Fundy just gave her a thumbs-up before sleepily slinking away out of the complex, most likely to get home as Wilbur should be doing.

“See you ‘round,” Wilbur called as he followed through the doors Fundy had exited through, a reply of “you bet!” met his ears before the doors closed after him.

He faintly saw Fundy’s retreating form from the building’s main entrance, though another figure entered his vision and a grin found its way to his face.

“Hey there friend,” Wilbur only grinned more as the masked figure paused and looked at him, a mix of dread and confusion on their face.

“Please no,” the figure, also known as the hero Paralysis (for their ability to prevent someone’s

movement upon contact) who had been dubbed Corpse as a joke by Sykunno a while back and the name had stuck.

Wilbur only laughed, as Corpse's pupilless eyes (Eret and him had bonded over that fact) widened with the knowledge of he was going to say what Corpse thought he was going to say.

“Happy Birthday!” Wilbur all but whispered- *he hoped the rest of the ground floor heard him*- as Corpse just put his head in his hands.

“Why must you torture me.”

“I distinctly remember someone helping Techno set up something for mine-”

“Alright, that's fair.”

“Wait, how'd you even know it was my birthday?” Corpse continued.

Wilbur looked away and conveniently spotted a plant ability wielding human coming through one of the ground floor corridors, he glanced back at Corpse and then back at Sykunno, hoping he got the message. He did.

“Sy why must you pain me this way,” Corpse turned his complaints to his best ‘friend’, Wilbur would be lying if he said he didn't join in on the occasional teasing with Rae.

Sykunno looked at Corpse, then to Wilbur, so he took it as his queue to leave- *by phasing through the fucking floor of course*,, he could faintly hear the protest of “Hey you can't leave me here!”

And yes, Sykunno, he can and will.

Chapter End Notes

- Ahaha, this is was supposed to be finished and released on the 8th.... writer's block can go suck it.

Chapter 9: No, I Didn't Fall Down the Stairs

Chapter Summary

Tommy and Wilbur finally meet up outside of the cafe (only for them to visit the cafe a few minutes into it).

Chapter Notes

- Haha, you thought it was just meaningless filler fluff.

Tommy managed a solid 6 hours of sleep, which was pretty impressive, the only downside being it was currently 5 minutes past 9:00 am. Which was when he'd promised to meet Wilbur this morning.

Scrambling out of bed and tucking his wings away he clambered his way over to his closet next to the pop-out couch, selecting the first shirt and pants he saw and the belt he commonly used when he wasn't working at Puffy's café. He grabbed his phone and wallet from his bedside table and dipped, not passing any of the other members of the apartment room on his way to the door and down the stairwell.

Hatten's Corner Park was only a 5-minute walk from the apartment block, but Tommy would rather not keep Wilbur waiting lest not another awkward phone call. He turned down the concrete pathway in a light jog only slowly at the pedestrian lights, he'd rather not get hit by a car as much as Tubbo would laugh at him for it.

He crossed the street, passing people out for their usual weekend activities, early shopping, coffee trips or whatever else there was to do outside like a normal person. He moved out of the way of a woman pushing a pram down the sidewalk and strode past an elderly couple occupying the majority of the pathway.

On days like these, he wished he could just *fly*.

He opted to cross the street where the path was surrounded by grass as opposed to shop windows and continue jogging to the intersection that was across from the park.

The sign switched to a green walking figure, courtesy of another pedestrian heading in the opposite direction, Tommy ran past them midway, rounding the corner to the gates of the park. He spotted Wilbur also immediately from where he was behind the tall black fence, walking through the entrance he watched as Wilbur tossed some crumbs to stray birds in front of the park bench.

Tommy chuckled quietly at his actions, but his ear feathers puffed by happily, glad to see him looking happier than yesterday, even if he still looked as sleep-deprived. He waved over at him as he approached the bench, Wilbur looked up at him, a delighted smile finding its way to his face.

"Tommy!" Wilbur exclaimed as he got up and crossed the distance between them, wrapping his

arms around the younger but barely smaller (which was a little concerning for the former's ego). Tommy tensed, he wasn't usually hugged except on the very rare occasions from his roommates, so he sort of just stood awkwardly for a moment before he reanimating himself a second later allowing himself to wrap his arms around his ~~brother~~ friend.

The worry he'd been carrying from last night vanished as he gently held onto the back of Wilbur's shirt, tucking his head against Wilbur's shoulder (Tommy would never dare say from the endless teasing he'd receive but he really wished this moment would last forever). He felt Wilbur chuckle as he slowly let go and Tommy grumbled as he blinked up at him.

"Didn't know you were such a softie for all that talk," Wilbur smirked, ruffling his hair.

"Shut up, dickhead, I was worried about you, that's all," Tommy protested, feathers flattening but he didn't move away from the contact.

Wilbur blinked at him, "why on earth were worried about me? You know I can take care of myself, right?"

Tommy grumbled a barely audible complaint of "sure," before he sighed.

"Are you alright, Tommy? Where is this coming from?"

"Did something happen?" Wilbur pressed, his hands finding Tommy's shoulders and resting there reassuringly.

Oh yeah. Tommy doesn't know about last night.

Tommy groaned into his hand, attempting to play off his mistake of letting that slip, "I know you can take care of yourself, and no, nothing happened... just- bird habits or something, don't ask me because I don't know," shrugging Wilbur's hands-off.

"Oh yeah, you're a bird, *do you want some crumbs-*"

Tommy lightly hit Wilbur's arm that held the brown paper bag with breadcrumbs in it, "no you prick."

Wilbur rolled his eyes, "sure lil birdy-" he paused as his eyes lit up, "does that mean you have wings?"

"Course I do, what, you thought I just have ear feathers?"

"Well, no but it didn't occur to me before."

"For someone who acts so smart, you sure are unintelligent."

"Rude."

"I'm not wrong."

Wilbur ignored the last comment, "can you show me?"

"What?"

"Your wings."

"Yeah, I gathered that part."

“Just had to make sure, but can you?”

“Why?”

“Because I want to see if they’re as cool as you talk them up to be, but if they’re anything like the rest of you-”

“I’m plenty cool, thank you very much and my wings are so awesome, in fact, they’re so awesome I can’t show you; they would blow your tiny brain capacity.”

“Did you just insult my brain capacity as a coverup to you declining, meaning they’re probably all talk.”

“Are not, I just can’t show you.”

“Why not?”

Tommy gave him a look that said, ‘*what do you mean, ‘why not?’*’

“What, why can’t you show me? Give me a valid reason.”

“It’s illegal in public to use abilities without a licence.”

Wilbur paused seeming to have to remember that fact, which was a little concerning, “okay fair enough.”

“Thank you, now if you excuse me, I want to go get food that isn’t the same heated leftovers.”

Wilbur shrugged, “sure, pick a place.”

“Little duckling café.”

“Don’t you literally work there 5 days a week?”

“Yup, plus, workers discount.”

“Valid point.”

“Do you want anything?” Tommy asked as he pushed open the glass café door, looking back at Wilbur who was following him.

Wilbur glanced at him before looking over to the barista, “you reckon your co-workers would give me 5 shots-”

Tommy elbowed him, “if you mysteriously get food poisoning from the next coffee you drink from this shop, I had nothing to do with it.”

“I feel like that’s against safety regulations- you know, poisoning customers.”

“I’ll give you something from another shop at the same time, not my problem then.”

“That’s still traceable to you.”

“If you’re unresponsive they won’t know that.”

“Tommy, can you plot murder elsewhere and order?” Wallace (dubbed Wally), one of Tommy’s co-workers asked as she finished dialling up the customer in front of them.

“Could I get one triple shot latte, a chai tea and two cheese toasties?”

“Sure, cash or card?”

Tommy fumbled with his wallet, pulling out a \$10 note and handing it to them, they took it and slid out the register, swiping a 50c coin out and setting it on the counter as they wrote down his order, “your change.”

Tommy took the coin and put it in the separate section that was lacking in coins and shuffled over to the side of the counter where takeaway orders were collected.

“Man, I wish I got workers discount.”

“Then work here- actually where do you even work again?”

“Uh, I’m a personal trainer of sorts.”

“...didn’t you say you worked with kids?”

“Occasionally.”

“Posh kids?”

“Depends.”

“Right... fucking weirdo, I’m just not gonna ask.”

“You say that as if you haven’t spoken to me before, which I must say you clearly have.”

“Sure...”

“Anyway, what do you want to do?”

“Did you not have a plan?”

“I was just going to hang around the park.”

“We can go do that.”

“Order for Tommy.”

Tommy grinned and took his tea and brown paper bag of cheese toasties, handing Wilbur’s coffee to him.

“Let’s go chase some birds.”

“I’m not going near the geese; you can face their wrath alone.”

“Ha, are you scared of a bird?”

“Trust me you should be.”

“I’m not going to be scared of a bird.”

Tommy screeched as he scampered away from the pond, a hoard of several angry geese following after him.

“I told you so!” Wilbur cheerfully called out to his suffering companion, watching him trip up a slightly higher part of the pond’s bank.

“I didn’t think they could understand me!”

“They know all, they see all and they’ll come for you later when you least expect them.”

“Have you had like, past experience or something?” he shouted over to Wilbur who was standing off to the side sipping his coffee smugly though the man did shudder at the comment.

Tommy chuckled at Wilbur’s assumed previous suffering, before remembering his own imminent one as he dodged a peck on the heels, continuing to run away from the pond.

“Are you people judging?”

“It’s called people watching, Tommy.”

“Sure, because you’re totally being completely unjudgmental right now.”

“Just because I’m judging you, doesn’t mean I’m judging else one else.”

“What about those kids over there?”

“What about them?”

“I’m pretty sure those two just bet on that other kid making it across the pond and- *oh he fell.*”

“Look there’s a Karen there too,” Wilbur raised one of his fingers holding his cup and gestured towards another lady who walked over to the kids and had started complaining to another woman who had pulled the boy out of the water.

“See look, calling someone a Karen is a form of judgment.”

“Yeah, but those ones are usually self-explanatory, didn’t you complain the other day about one?”

“Yeah, but that’s because she wanted a cinnamon dipped bagel with cream cheese.”

Wilbur raised his eyebrow.

“We don’t even sell bagels!”

Wilbur watched in amusement as Tommy sat on the ground plucking grass from his surrounding area and either trying to fold it, create a whistle out of it or throw it at him (even though the wind was blowing towards Tommy, so it wasn’t really working). Wilbur bent down and picked up a small twig presumably from the tree they were under and chucked it at Tommy, much to the teen’s

dismay as he screeched and threw the stick back at him.

It landed harmlessly at his feet, “Tommy how did you miss that, I’m only one step away from you.”

“I’m just too amazing.”

“That’s not even a solid answer.”

“It is in my world.”

“Sure.”

Wilbur sighed and threw a handful of grass at Tommy who stood up and brushed the grass off himself, flipping him off with his free hand, “asshole.”

Wilbur could only laugh at him which earned him a few more swears and protests of “don’t laugh at me bitch, I’m a big man.”

“Tommy I’m taller than you.”

“No, you’re not, but you can keep thinking that way, whatever floats your kayak.”

“Kayak?”

“Kayaks are better.”

“Sure Tommy, sure.”

“Are you challenging my opinions on the superior aquatic vessel?”

“You never know.”

“Then tell me, I need to know if I need to kick your ass.”

“As if you could.”

“Puffy taught me **some moves.**”

“I feel like you just said those last two words in cursive.”

“How can speech be in cursive?”

“It just can be.”

“That’s not an answer either!”

“I’m gonna climb a tree.”

“Go for it, if you die, I saw nothing.”

“Wow, such faith you have in my climbing ability.”

“For all I know you could have the climbing ability of a fish.”

“Rude, I am the amazing Tommy, I can climb this tree *easily*.”

Tommy took hold of one of the lower branches and lifted himself into the split trunk of the tree, searching for a suitable spot to try to climb too.

He stood on a thicker branch and casually walked along it, the branch holding his weight as he hoisted himself into another higher but slightly thinner branch. He swung his feet and stared down at Wilbur who stared back at him questioningly.

“You should join me.”

“I’d prefer to get all of my bones intact, thank you very much.”

“Aw come on.”

“Tommy, you sound like a child.”

“I’m a big man, not a child, get it right, bitch.”

“You’re literally 16.”

“So?”

“You’re a child.”

“Am not.”

“Are too.”

“Am not.”

“Are too.”

“Am not.”

“Are to-” Wilbur begun again only to be interrupted by the ringtone of his phone.

“Ha, I win.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes and answered the call, flipping Tommy off as he held it to his ear. Tommy watched as Wilbur’s eyes widen at something he was told, “I’ll be there,” Wilbur replied before hanging up the phone.

“Something up?” Tommy asked, jumping down from the tree branch and landing beside Wilbur.

“Yeah, a friend of mine is in the hospital, so I’ll have to cut our meet up short, sorry.”

“Oh, shit dude, of course, it’s no problem, which friend though?”

“George.”

“George?”

“You know him?”

“No, but I’ve heard of him, tell them I send my regards.”

Wilbur nodded, “now scat,” Tommy added, making a shooing motion to Wilbur.

Wilbur exhaled a laugh, ruffling Tommy’s hair, “cya ‘round, kid.”

“Oh, fuck off,” Tommy called as Wilbur jogged away, but he couldn’t find it in him to put any real meaning behind it.

Wilbur arrived at the entrance of the daunting white building, it was painfully familiar, he didn’t have any positive memories associated with this place. Techno had been here once when he’d been caught off guard by a gunman, Phil had been here too many times to count for pain medication due to his back injury that never fully healed and would cause him too much pain to sleep at night. Wilbur knew when it affected his father, even if Phil never spoke a word of it, he’d see him in the kitchen at ungodly hours in the morning on those nights. Those were always the worse, it made him feel useless. The whole building did.

He stepped inside the hero’s hospital, disguised as a private one so that reporters didn’t swamp the area when people were recovering or visiting injured friends or loved ones. He spotted the receptionist talking with a rather upset individual one that as he approached recognised as Dream, or under his hero alias, Smiler.

“I’m sorry but we’re only allowing immediate family in for visiting,” the receptionist explained.

“I am his immediate family,” Dream stressed.

“What are your ties to him?”

“We’re engaged.”

“I’m sorry sir but I cannot allow you in as you are not yet immediate family, visiting hours for friends, and in your case, fiancé will be opened in the next few hours minimum.”

Wilbur could only sympathise, before they’d added in adopted siblings, he hadn’t been allowed to visit Phil (of course that didn’t stop him, he just had to disappear when the doctors reappeared).

“What do you mean, ‘not yet’?” Dream sounded like he just might cry.

“Dream, leave the poor receptionist alone,” Wilbur called prompting the hero’s attention.

“Wilbur,” his tone was more solid than a few seconds ago but lacked the usual confidence his voice held.

“Take a walk with me,” Wilbur suggested, trying to lead him away from the watchful eyes of the receptionist.

“But-” Dream started before Wilbur shot him a glance that said, ‘come on’.

Dream grumbled but followed him to an area around the corner where there was a waiting lounge for visitors along with a few vending machines.

“Wilbur, what are you doing?” Dream asked, his question coming off with a harsher tone than he’d probably meant it to, but Wilbur just suspected he was worried, which was fair, Wilbur himself had been all over the place when Techno had been injured.

“Wait here for a second, would you?” Wilbur asked, gesturing to the room before Wilbur used his

ability and disappeared from Dream's view.

He phased through the wall and to the receptionist's desk, looking over her paperwork to see which room George had been placed in.

Patient: George David

Condition: Stable

Room: 24

Wilbur mentally noted the room and walked back over to the waiting room, reappearing to a very jittery Dream.

Wilbur glanced around, there wasn't anyone else here and the receptionist wasn't able to see anyone around the corner. He held his hand out to Dream, "I've been practising something."

Dream just looked at him in puzzlement, "take my hand, dumbass," Wilbur instructed.

Dream took Wilbur's hand and Wilbur closed his eyes in concentration, feeling the familiar shift in his body weight when he used his ability and mentally extended it to Dream. When he opened his eyes, Dream was staring at him in bewilderment and glancing down at himself, now being translucent instead of a solid mass.

Dream reached out and touched the vending machine, seemingly confused when he didn't go through it, "I can't make you intangible, this is a very new thing but you're fully invisible, just don't crash into anything, and don't let go of my hand until we get there."

"How do you know where we're going?"

"I just checked, we're going to room 24, also, they can still hear us so don't say anything, ok?"

Dream nodded and Wilbur led him out of the waiting room, past the unsuspecting receptionist and into the hallway where the rooms were, walking for a few doors before spotting a doctor walking in their direction. He gestured for Dream to stand to the side, and they stayed stationary as they passed, only continuing when the doctor was a few doors behind them.

Dream pointed to a door up ahead labelled 24, Wilbur nodded, walking over to it and quietly pressing down on the door's handle, allowing them both to enter before he closed the door.

A quiet, "Hello?" came from the bed as Wilbur turned to find George staring around the room, trying to look for who opened the door.

"George!" Dream whisper yelled, letting go of Wilbur's hand and reappearing, obviously startling the brunette with his sudden appearance.

"How the fuck-" the brunette began before being tackled into a hug.

"Hey, watch it, I'm injured that thank you very much," though George's comment was half-hearted at best.

"I can see that," Dream grumbled, looking over George whose arm was in a cast and leg was covered in various bandages, along with a bandage wrapping from his left shoulder to his upper torso.

"How'd you manage that, Gogy?" Wilbur asked, also becoming visible and finding it very amusing as he accidentally scared the shit out of him.

“Wilbur you really need to stop doing that.”

“Signature move, lil man.”

George rolled his eyes at Wilbur but leaned into Dream who was softly combing through his hair, “got pushed off a three-story building.”

“How the fuck did you only break your arm,” Wilbur muttered while Dream only narrowed his eyes at the news, “was the culprit caught?”

George shook his head, “but I did get a good look at him so if I see him again, I’ll definitely recognise him.”

“What’d he look like?”

George sighed and shot a pointed look at Dream, “what, I won’t do anything.”

“Sure, and you’re not a stubborn little shit.”

“Well, I’m taller than you so technically-”

“Dream I can still kick your ass from this bed.”

“Okay, okay.”

George only pressed himself into the pillow behind his head as Dream continued, “but what’d he look like?”

George sighed but ultimately relented, “Short, magnet ability, bright neon orange hair, black jacket with blue highlights and just grey shirt and pants, dunno anything else.”

“That’s pretty extensive considering you were pushed off a building,” Wilbur added.

“We had a little brawl prior, but he threw an antenna at me, so,” George shrugged as he finished.

“An antenna??” Dream practically squawked.

Wilbur tuned out the rest of their conversation, bringing his phone out of his pocket, typing out the man’s description and sending it to himself, Dream had half-heartedly said he wouldn’t do anything, but Wilbur hadn’t. Besides, he was sure he could get Dream to assist him in a manhunt.

Tommy checked his phone after he heard it ding whilst he was lounging around the apartment, he clicked on the screen, it illuminating the slightly dark living room due to the limited light filtering through the window and the fact Tommy hadn’t bothered to turn the apartment light on.

Wilbur (*5 am sleep deprived adult child*)

Wilbur at 2:51pm:

Short, bright neon orange hair, black jacket with blue highlights, grey shirt and pants, magnet ability. Ask Dream for help.

“What the fuck?”

Chapter 10: I Was The First One To Set Eyes On Them

Chapter Summary

Is that your child? Not anymore.

Chapter Notes

- One of the sweeter chapters I've written, Tommy even gets a wholesome scene :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy pulled his bandana higher on his face, shielding himself as much as he could from the harsh winds that had been more frequent in the recent days. He'd even gotten a weather alert on his phone before he'd left, warning of winds of up to 80kmph (50mph), clearly, storms were rolling in this week which meant he had to be more mindful of weather conditions. Tree branches had been known to throw themselves at walls when the wind picked up in stormy weather, many buildings closer to the parks have had their windows strengthened multiple times in the past years due to their proximity to the trees.

Tommy allowed his wings to extend to their fullest, feathers ruffling in the breeze as it flowed past his perch on top of a streetlight, feeling particularly badass while doing so.

Well, until a gust of wind caught him off guard, making him lose his balance and fall off, though he did catch himself before the concrete did.

His ego survived, it's fine. *This is fine.*

He resumed his post, surveying the dark greys dappled with the occasional yellow hue of the streetlights that scattered amongst the streets, some having blown their bulbs long ago, others flickering from faulty cabling. It wasn't the nicest part of town, but it was one of the more crime-infested districts, indirectly becoming one of the most interesting parts of town for Tommy. He'd once broken a black-market deal on copious amounts of hand-sanitiser (that he later found was all spiked because, *of course*, you can drink it).

Amongst the greys was what appeared to be a darker ladder, most likely a fire ladder, one of the older ones that lead to the roof without the safety outer edge. Tommy watched as a small shape fumbled its way up the ladder and pulled itself up and onto the roof.

He might as well check it out, even if someone was up for some late-night stargazing, you could never be too sure.

He glided over slowly, becoming increasingly aware of a quiet sobbing emanating from the roof, he landed a street over from the building's roof that overlooked a 'main' street for the outer district, even though no vehicles were present at the hour.

He peered closer at the huddled shape on the edge, *this felt familiar*, though it was too small to be

an adult and they had what appeared to be pig-like features. The shape scooted alarmingly close to the edge, a stray foot dangling over the edge, unbothered by the danger posed by the fall from that height, the building was at *least* 10 stories. The shape wiped their eyes into their sleeve and Tommy couldn't stay stationary any longer, he rose from his perch and carried himself through the wind, his wing beats intentional and louder than usual. He'd rather not scare them by a sudden entrance.

The shape looked up at the approaching shape in fright, Tommy could see their face, it was a child, barely older than 4 by the looks of it. Tommy landed beside them; his posture seemingly relaxed but he was ready to spring forward at any second should the kid show even the slightest signs of losing their balance.

Now that Tommy was closer, he could see the kid's poor physic, they were clearly malnourished and they were shivering in the crisp night air, huddling in on themselves but had managed to shuffle away from Tommy while remaining close to the edge.

Tommy hesitated, he didn't just want to grab the kid and cause them stress, but he didn't want to let them fall at all, so he opted to lowering his bandana to around his neck and deactivating his glasses to show his face. The kid's eyes stayed on him warily as Tommy slowly lowered himself to a crouch a metre from them.

“It's a nice view of the stars, isn't it?” Tommy commented glancing up at the sparkling specks visible from in between the clouds, the small child followed his gaze though Tommy noted that they'd keep glancing at him every few seconds to check if he'd moved. Tommy kept all of his motions slow and hands visible, his wings tucked neatly behind him, his feathers being tussled by the wind.

“Aren't you cold up here?” Tommy asked, watching as they shook their head only to immediately shudder as the breeze picked up and blew at their back. Tommy unfurled one of his wings carefully, deliberately making his movements known as he shielded their back, he received a confused glance in reply.

“.:̄T̄|| S̄::L̄||J̄=̄T̄L̄::!;̄!J̄ →̄J̄L̄?” (Why are you helping me?)

“Why wouldn't I?”

The child's eyes widened in panic, “S̄::L̄||J̄=̄S̄̄T̄L̄::J̄?̄J̄=̄J̄L̄||̄T̄.̄J̄!̄N̄̄J̄L̄̄!̄J̄T̄.̄T̄.̄J̄T̄.̄J̄.̄J̄!̄T̄.̄J̄̄T̄L̄::J̄L̄.̄Ȳ” (are you a hero? Mummy told me not to talk to heroes.)

Tommy's eyes narrowed and he felt the whispers of his avainhood creep into his mind though he replied calmly, “no, I'm not a hero.”

“.:̄T̄S̄T̄.̄S̄::L̄||J̄=̄T̄.̄T̄L̄!̄J̄?” (What are you then?)

Tommy plucked one of his white feathers, its tip having a grey stripe, he passed it over to the small child who took it and turned it over softly in their hands.

The pair stayed like that for a while, both on the edge of a building, Tommy watching over the unknown child whose crying had, for the most part, stopped, apart from the occasional tear they'd wipe away with their stripped sleeve. The piglin-hybrid blinked up at Tommy, the feather held gently between their fingers as they stopped petting the fluffy part of it.

“ſ፡፡L፡||J፡= ſ!J ſ!J →L፡!?” (Are you an angel?)

Tommy paused, looking down at the kid who had slightly shuffled closer, he wasn't an angel not in the slightest. But this kid didn't need Tommy, or Rioter, he needed an angel. So, if Tommy became an angel that night in the eyes of ~~his~~ this child, who was he to say otherwise?

He nodded tentatively at them and gently dropped his wing so it was resting on their back before drawing them closer but allowing them out of his wing's grasp should they so choose. He gathered them in his arms, his wings coming up around them, shielding them both from the wind and the outside world. They climbed onto his lap and clung to his hoodie; the feather still tightly held in their little hand.

His mind cooed at him, betraying thoughts of *bean, protect, safe, keep safe* floated around as he readjusted himself so that he could easily stand while still having a firm grip on the small child.

“I’ll keep you safe, I promise.”

“!בְּלֹא־מִלְּאָה־בְּלֹא־מִלְּאָה” (Please don't let her hurt me.)

“Who?”

“·—·—·” (Mummy.)

“Why does your mother hurt you?”

“**מֵמֹמָה אֵלֶיךָ לֹא־אֶלְעָזֶר**” (Mummy doesn’t like me.)

“Do you normally stay with your mother?”

A nod along with a distressed *oink* was the reply.

“Do you have anyone else?”

Tommy grumbled slightly but spread his wings to their full length as he stood, his feathers were slightly more bristled than usual, though he didn't notice as he launched himself into the air, casually committing child theft.

Tommy landed on the balcony of their shared apartment, the kid he'd stolen was tucked under one of his wings and held securely in his arm as he used the other to push the glass door open, closing it and striding through the house. He found the closest room that didn't contain any of his roommates, which happened to be the small laundry they had to the side of their living room. It was warmer in here than the rest of the house thanks to the dryer.

He lowered the child onto the floor, “wait here, okay?”

They nodded and Tommy silently closed the door after him, heading to his bed and taking off the majority of his vigilante gear, aside from the underlying suit, gathering a few blankets and pillows

before hurrying back to the laundry.

“→Jl:↖” (Gold) they exclaimed cheerfully, reaching up at Tommy’s now uncovered hair.

Tommy smiled, ruffling the kid’s pink hair as he scattered the blankets and pillows around in a way that satisfied him. He sat in the midst of it and patted a pillow next to him, looking back at the child who scrambled over to sit next to him.

“I’m Tommy, what’s your name?”

“Jl:↖” (Michael)

“Well Michael, you’ll be safe here, okay? Then we can figure out something.”

Michael nodded, scooting closer to Tommy as he combed through their knotted hair with his fingers, one of his wings acting as another blanket over the presumed toddler.

“Michael... do you know how old you are?” Tommy asked idly, wanting to confirm his suspicions.

“T. T::L·L· S!J ↗ S J! T.” (Three and a bit) Michael grinned up at him, gently grabbing at one of Tommy’s feathers and running their small fingers through them.

Tommy practically puffed up happily, a small quiet chirp resounding in the small room, *ok, didn’t know that was a thing.*

Michael *oinked* enthusiastically in reply, now taking to brush each of his individual feathers.

Tommy sighed, leaning up against the wall, content to just stay in here with ~~his hatching~~ Michael, listening to the sounds of Michael quietly squeaking to himself while the thrum of the dryer both warmed the room and tunned out any background noise from the house and outside.

Tubbo looked up from his project, putting down the small tool he’d been using to carve out the small insides of the knife’s handle, preparing it to hold a small compartment that different chemicals could be loaded into that would then drain into the knife’s carved exterior. Though he hadn’t done that part yet, more focusing on getting it in rather than getting it out effectively at the current moment.

He glanced up at his monitor, the one that displayed a list of hero routes and sightings, last he knew Tommy was in district 11, so he tapped on the microphone connecting to his roommate’s headset, “Pyro spotted in district 4, be careful of neighbouring streets.”

Tubbo cut the audio off and expected to hear a reply, even if it was just an ‘mhm’ of acknowledgement. However, what he did not expect was radio silence, which was what he happened to get.

Clicking to his other monitor as he turned his microphone on, he switched to Tommy’s location tracker, “You good Big-,” Tubbo cut himself off as he registered the data projected onto his screen, Tommy’s tracker was *at home...?*

He hadn’t heard him arrive home, *unless he’d just gotten back?* Tommy hadn’t put his gear away so Tubbo assumed he was just arriving back, dusting off his pants and exiting the hobbies room to find his roommate, who was admittedly home far earlier than usual.

Tubbo walked into the living room, the kitchen counter overlooking it and the whole area leading to the balcony, it was a fairly open space. In said kitchen was Ranboo, mixing something or other together in a glass bowl with many ingredients scattered around the bench, a heap of flour had also acquainted itself with both a patch on the kitchen counter where he was cooking and the hybrid's hair, which was more visible on the black half. Though the dual-toned boy himself didn't seem to notice or care.

"Have you seen Tommy?" Tubbo voiced, looking over at Ranboo who looked up from his baking, the boy shook his head.

"Not since he got back from work, but his gear is on his bed and all the spare blankets aren't in the cupboard next to his bed when I went to go get a change of pillowcase."

"...so, he's home...?"

"I assume so, the keys are still hanging by the door, and I didn't lock the balcony door, so it must've been Tommy if not you."

"Alright then..."

Tubbo continued around the house, the bathroom door was open, no Tommy was to be found, he wasn't in their shared bedroom or their hobbies room, he wasn't in the living room joint with the kitchen, he wasn't outside, so the only other place inside he hadn't checked was the laundry, *but Tommy never did the laundry...?*

Tubbo walked over to the door to the side of the living room, opening it to see a blur of pink before it was covered with feathers as Tommy's wings flared, one was out and as extended as it could be in the small space and the other was wrapped around something to the side of Tommy that Tubbo couldn't see. Tubbo subconsciously backed up as he made eye contact with Tommy, whose eyes were narrowed distrustingly.

"Tubbo," Tommy threatened, and Tubbo could tell it was a weighted threat, not one made from jokingly empty retorts, he'd lived with Tommy for almost 8 years now, he could tell when his roommate was joking, now was not one of those times. Tubbo felt a chill run down his spine, Tommy wasn't even standing and Tubbo still felt that Tommy held the high ground.

"Tubbo, get out."

Tubbo chuckled nervously, his palms had started to become sweaty in a matter of seconds, "on it, Big T," he replied, stepping backwards and closing the door behind him.

Tubbo wiped his hands on his shirt and shook his head, he honestly felt sorry for the poor fuckers that managed to piss Tommy off while he was out in the field as Rioteer.

Tubbo retreated back into the kitchen and hovered around Ranboo who after a few seconds of silence glanced down at him questioningly.

"I think something's wrong with Tommy."

"You always think that."

"No Boo, like actually wrong with him."

Ranboo paused, releasing his grip on the whisk (though Ranboo didn't know it was called that), "why do you say that?"

“I feel like he’s gone all feral, he won’t let me anywhere near him, I felt like he was gonna try and murder me or something.”

“Oh- well in that case no, he’s fine.”

“What? How can you be so sure?”

“He did that to me when I first came, wouldn’t leave your side for the first few weeks and refused to leave you in a room with me for the weeks after.”

“Wait seriously? How did I not notice that?”

Ranboo laughed nervously, “dunno, but I sure remember being threatened by him, saying that if I got any closer than 3 metres, I could kiss goodbye to my kneecaps and functioning elbows.”

“Ouch.”

“Yeah, fun times.”

“But why would he be doing it now?”

“Was he being defensive of anything?”

“Well, he had his wing wrapped around *something*, not sure what.”

“Well, I say he’s either stolen a child or a small animal off the streets, you might just have to wait a while to find out- oh, and I doubt he’ll move from there.”

“For how long?”

“No clue, give him a day or two, he might be slightly better tomorrow, go get some rest, Tubbo.”

“It’s not that late, plus you’re still up.”

“It’s 10 pm, and you’ve been working late for the past few days, besides, I’m stress baking, I’ll join you after I bake these cupcakes.”

“Aw, but I wanna help decorate!”

Ranboo sighed, “fine, you can stay up and help me decorate, but after you have to promise me that you’ll go to bed afterwards.”

“Deal,” Tubbo grinned, opening one of the cupboards to dig out their decorating supplies which included various food dyes, dodgy store-bought icing that was high in sugar, copious amounts of sprinkles all in different variations and numerous candles some generic and some numerical (the number one candle was a bit melted from consistent use if Tubbo was being honest).

Tommy awoke to the pitter-patter of raindrops echoing through the house, the thrum of the dryer long since faded from the background noise of the house. He glanced down at his lap where Michael had their head resting against his chest, his wings had subconsciously curled around their form while the pair slept. Tommy glanced up at the door, which was still closed, he could faintly pick up the muffled raindrop’s steady increase both in intensity and volume.

A particular strike of lightning flashed outside; the curtains must not have been closed as he could

see the light flash under the doorway. A rumble of thunder accompanied the bright light moments later and he felt Michael stir beneath him. An eye blinked back at him, one still squinted shut, he'd noticed over the few hours he'd stayed with them it had yet to be opened either. Though he assumed he couldn't, a pale jagged scar travelled down over their eyelid and the bottom part sagged every so slightly appearing heavier than normal.

Michael reached up at him with one arm, trying to grab hold of his shirt to no avail from the practically skin-tight material that was the underclothes of his vigilante gear. Tommy reached down and took their hand in his own, "you alright?"

They nodded hesitantly but flinched as another rumble of thunder echoed around the apartment, Tommy tightened his grip on them unintentionally but gazed down at the small child.

"There's nothing to fear here, the storm can't hurt you," Tommy reassured, sitting up slightly from where he was resting against the wall and scooping Michael into his arms as he slowly stood up from the laundry floor where blankets and pillows had been heaped together.

Michael huddled into his warmth, "do you want to come watch the rain?"

Michael merely blinked up at him before slowly nodding, Tommy pulled a blanket from the floor, one that they'd been lying on, so it wasn't too cold. He draped it over Michael's shoulder's as he placed them on the tiles beside him.

Tommy walked to the door, carefully opening it to not make a sound, preventing the door from creaking when it was fully opened. He surveyed the interior; the lights were off but there was enough light filtering in through the windows despite the storm outside, along with the faint yellow glow from the laundry. It seemed both Ranboo and Tubbo had gone to bed, which was a good thing, they'd both been overworking themselves as of late. Tommy gestured for Michael to follow him out, spotting a blue sticky note on the kitchen counter as he passed, he stopped and skim read it.

'Hey Tommy, if you're reading this before we wake up, we baked some cupcakes earlier, feel free to take some and remember to take care of yourself :)'

The note was no doubt written by Ranboo, he could recognise his handwriting anywhere because of the lack of spelling mistakes, oh and the smiley face at the end. He shepherded Michael to over in the kitchen, lifting him up to sit on his shoulders as he got the container out.

"Do you want one?"

He felt Michael nod and happily squeaked, pointing to a cupcake with a little flower drawn on it.

Tommy lifted it from the container and passed it to them, putting the lid back on and heading back into the living room in front of the couch where the pair could stare out of the balcony's glass doors. He heard Michael cheerily chomping away at their cupcake while Tommy watched rain throw itself at the glass, water droplets racing down the windows as the wind howled outside.

Tommy took Michael off his shoulders the second time they nearly fell of from the booming thunder so instead the pair stood a few paces away from the glass, Tommy's wing circling the child as a secondary blanket from the one that draped to the floor. The cupcake wrapper lay on the black coffee table in front of their slightly worn-out grey couch.

Michael's hand was tiny compared to his own, but he held their hand as gently as he could muster

as the pair stood, Michael occasionally pointing to droplets of rain or shuffling closure to his side when the thunder got particularly loud.

“You can just call me Tommy, Michael,” Tommy quietly chuckled, ruffling their hair with his free hand.

“T. J. T. T. ||?” (Tommy?)

“What’s up, little bean?”

Tommy glanced down at Michael who still managed to have the feather he gave them earlier, the younger running their fingers over it as well as they could with only one hand.

“Didn’t you already ask me this?”

“Well then, I helped you because I want to.”

“∴ $\overline{T} \parallel$ ” (Why?)

“Because I know how it feels to be alone, and I wouldn’t wish it upon anyone.”

Michael paused.

They looked up at the glass, the rain had picked up and flashes of light were constant, but the thunder had become quieter, the electrical part of the storm must've been moving away with the fast winds.

Michael stared off into the distance and Tommy could tell he wasn't staring outside or at the glass, he could tell that their eyes held distance in them, they were lost in thought and Tommy was happy to wait while they did so.

It was a few minutes before the spell of silence was broken, well, if you could call it that with the pounding rain and it wasn't Tommy who did so.

“T. J. T. J. ||?” (Tommy?)

“Mm?” Tommy glanced back down at Michael whose eyes had focused and were now staring out the window.

Tommy shifted his attention to where Michael was also viewing the watery outside world.

“Well, the world has a way of dealing cards to everyone.”

Michael blinked at him, not quite understanding.

“Everyone gets a hand and that hand’s value can only be determined by how the person plays it, so, in life, everyone faces challenges, it’s what you choose to do that determines if your cards win

or lose.”

“Well, I could’ve either left you there to suffer the same cycle or, I could help you, shelter you from dealing your cards just a little longer so that you don’t have to make any win or lose calls while you’re still young.”

“It’s like a tough decision you have to make, some are easier than others, like when I first met Tubbo, I could’ve left him by himself with the people who were harassing him and gone about my day, or I could’ve stepped in and done something. Obviously, I chose the latter and I’ve never once regretted it.”

“∴ TJ’Կ Դ. Տ. ՏՈՅՈ՞Ր” (Who’s Tubbo?)

“He’s one of my roommates, you’d love him, but it’s probably best you don’t meet him straight away, I’d rather have you adjust here and I’m not sure how well my birdbrain is handling other people right now to be completely honest.”

Michael just tilted his head at him in confusion and Tommy chuckled a little in embarrassment, scratching at the back of his neck with his spare, right hand.

“I get a little... possessive when someone I care about is in trouble, or what my brain perceives to be as trouble.”

Michael just nodded though Tommy had a feeling they didn't understand quite exactly what he meant but that was alright, they were both content to stay watching the rain in the early hours of the morning (or extremely late hours of the nights, if he was being honest Tommy had no fucking clue what time it was).

Chapter End Notes

- I've recently changed my updating schedule from weekly on Fridays to fortnightly to accommodate longer chapters and allow me to check for consistencies (I hate plot holes, so I try to make sure everything is within reason). So if I appear to be updating slower that is why :)
- I hope you guys stick around for the ride because I'm certainly not done kicking yet and I live off fluff.

Chapter 11: Bird's Eye View

Chapter Summary

Michael and Tommy bond, just he didn't intend to have a run-in with a Karen today.

Chapter Notes

I'm quite proud of this title, I think I'm so funny.

Tommy awoke to the sound of cooing and a camera clicking, he grumbled something in his sleep and curled tighter around the bundle of blankets that was Michael, covering both himself and them from the outside world *and subsequently the noise of his roommates* with his wings.

His roommates-

His feathers almost immediately fluffed as his eyes snapped opened, finding where Ranboo and Tubbo were standing, Ranboo was a few metres in front of them taking photos while Tubbo was sitting on a stool at the kitchen counter drinking probably his second cup of coffee for the day.

Ranboo backed up a little when Tommy's gaze locked onto his form, his eyes narrowing as he shuffled into a sitting position, his hands finding Michael's form and cradling it, almost possessively. *Oh, who was he kidding, it was possessively.* Plus, it wasn't even his kid; it was one he'd literally nabbed from the streets the previous night, not that he'd be taking Michael back to his supposed family any time soon.

"See what I mean, Boo?"

"Yeah, but he was worse when I first arrived."

"I still don't remember this, but I'll have to take your word for it."

Tommy just silently watched their exchange, no one moved closer to him and Michael, so they weren't currently a problem, just a *potential* threat to his bird brain, not a *confirmed* one.

"How'd you sleep?" Tubbo asked, directing the question at him.

"Why is that what you ask, instead of, I don't know- maybe- 'where did the child come from?'" Ranboo interrupted.

Tubbo shrugged, "I'm just asking the more important questions here."

Ranboo made a noise somewhere between exasperation and disbelief, putting his head in his hands, "I can't with you, it's too early."

"Then perish."

“I may as well, honestly.”

Tubbo threw one of the cushions that had been sitting on the stool next to him at Ranboo, nailing him straight in the head, “headshot,” he called triumphantly.

Tommy only grumbled and fluffed his wings, tucking his head into the top of his wings and creating a dome of feathers around the blanketed Michael.

“Wow, he’s not usually this quiet,” Tubbo commented as he took another sip of his coffee, refocusing his attention on the giant pile of feathers on the couch.

“Yeah, and it’s scaring me,” Ranboo added, creeping away from the couch and over to Tubbo, still holding the pillow that had smacked him in the face while Tommy idly watched him.

“You’re one to talk,” Tubbo scoffed half-heartedly, sending a playful glare at Ranboo.

Ranboo spluttered in protest, “Hey! That’s different!” he exclaimed, before quietly adding “and only when I’m really stressed.”

Tubbo’s gaze softened as he placed his cup down on the bench behind him, turning himself on his stool to face Ranboo, making a small gesture for him to come closer. Ranboo crept closer, flinching in a nearly minuscule matter as Tubbo raised his hands, resting them on his head before gently carding their fingers through his hair. Ranboo leaned into the reassuring presence of his roommate while Tommy looked on approvingly.

He may not trust his roommates to a full extent right now, but he still cared about their well-being. Besides, no one had tried to do anything with ~~his~~ the child so he didn’t currently have a reason to be hostile towards them.

Tommy shuffled around the house in boredom, his wings were still out and had subsequently led to multiple feathers being left around the apartment. He followed behind Michael who had taken to doing laps around the living room, walking around the couch and between the coffee table continuously in loops whilst eating a sandwich Tommy had made them.

Michael suddenly shifted from his loop, waddling over to the hallway. Tommy idly fluffed his wings before tucking them behind him to follow them down the hallway. Michael dropped a few crumbs of bread as they explored down the small hallway and Tommy made a mental note to sweep them into the crumb-pile™ that they had going on in their kitchen to the side of one of the counters *that they really had to pick up with a dustpan and broom some time soon.*

Michael stopped at the entrance to their hobbies room, peering in at both of the occupants, *man they all really didn’t have lives, did they?*

Tubbo had a small tool and was prying a hilt of a familiar knife, which Tommy then realised was the same one he’d given him around two weeks ago. Damn, his vigilante persona had really taken a turn since then, coming into the eye of nationally famous heroes, he wasn’t sure why he decided that would be a good idea. He’d already known how hard facing one was, he didn’t appreciate The Blade trying to murder him fortnightly, though he supposed there were some positives to it, he’d learnt how to wield a blade from watching a legend’s technique and had practically completed a master class on dodge or die. It was either move it or lose it, quite literally in that case too.

Tommy spotted Ranboo tucked into one of the corners, his desk having been moved some time or other to against the wall, a small shelf overlooking the desk from the wall behind the dual-toned

boy. It held a stack of worn down but well-kept and thoroughly loved books, his signature journal and a small collection of rocks Ranboo had most likely found.

In front of the teleporter sat an array of both loose paper and clipped piles, held together with either clamps or staples. Among them was a carved little dragon made from obsidian with small shards of amethyst embedded on its surface, it was one of Ranboo's prized possessions, it'd been a little handmade gift from Tubbo that the boy constantly had on his desk. It was one of the only objects in Ranboo's corner that seemed to be consistently clean and unscathed in appearance.

His roommate in question seemed to currently be lost in thought, bent over a sketchbook, pencil sketches covering the majority of the previous page. Tommy shifted his attention to Michael who had started to wander over, Tubbo had looked up and acknowledged his entrance with a nod before getting back to work but Ranboo had remained indifferent. Tommy followed behind Michael softly on the wooden floorboards, crossing the room and reaching the soft black carpet under Ranboo's desk fairly quickly for Michael's slow pace.

Ranboo only seemed to notice them at that moment, blinking at their arrival and slowly setting his pencil down, maintaining his gaze on Tommy, though Ranboo wouldn't go as far as to make eye contact, Tommy knew the boy detested it as it just made him unnecessarily anxious. Ranboo turned on his colourful chair that clashed with his usual attire, but Tommy wasn't really one to talk.

Ranboo blinked up at Tommy before glancing back down at Michael who had shuffled closer, trying to peer up at Ranboo's drawings even though he was smaller than the desk. Tommy eyed him closely as Ranboo lowered his arms in view of him, the small child waddling closer as if knowing he'd be able to see. Tommy scowled but didn't stop Ranboo from lifting Michael up onto his lap to comfortably sit and see his scribbled drawings of figures ranging from ones that looked vaguely like heroes to characters he'd sworn he'd seen Ranboo watching a tv show on.

Tommy stepped closer, shuffling roughly behind Ranboo's chair, his wings had unintentionally created a semi-open box around them. Tubbo glanced up at them, mostly Ranboo, with mild concern.

"Please don't kill our roommate," he requested before redirecting his attention to a small glass vial with smoky liquid.

Tommy grunted in brief acknowledgement, nodding his head but eyes never straying from Michael.

Ranboo nervously chuckled but kept his arms loosely around Michael so he wouldn't fall, Ranboo would rather not be murdered even if he didn't mean to drop the child. Michael had remained surprisingly still, gazing at Ranboo's sketches which Tommy had to admit, weren't all that bad.

It'd been at least an hour since Michael had made himself at home in Ranboo's lap though now he was currently using the hybrid as a pillow for his nap. The ender-hybrid in question had switched from drawing in his sketchbook to his journal, which he'd asked Tommy to reach up and get to not disturb Michael. Tommy had shuffled around and taken the book but somehow had managed to not break his vision of the lanky boy. Tommy had huffed and plopped himself down next to Ranboo's chair on a smaller stool sometime after that.

Now the trio was quietly doing their own thing in the corner, Tommy could feel his eyelids becoming heavy but he kept them open only allowing his head to rest on a non-paper covered patch

on Ranboo's desk.

He could make out vague words Ranboo was writing in his fancy writing or whatever, Tommy didn't know what it was called but apparently, he could read it and that wasn't normal. Tubbo never had any idea what Ranboo was writing, even after the ender-hybrid in question had tried to teach the slightly older ram-hybrid. But despite understanding things Tommy could never hope to he couldn't understand the basic pattern Ranboo's writing followed.

Tubbo clicked the final compartment into place and promptly noticed the lack of screaming or arguments, he glanced up and spotted his chaotic roommates (+ one stray) sleeping on Ranboo's desk- *which really needed to be cleaned by the way*- well, Michael was more curled up on Ranboo's lap with Tommy draping his wing over the slumped form of Ranboo.

Ranboo would regret doing that later if his back had anything to say about it.

Tubbo clicked the lid of the box he'd secured the knife in closed with vials each in their own separate compartments.

Tubbo checked his watch, it was around 1 pm, meaning he still had a fair bit of the day left, might as well get cracking on the next project.

Tommy blinked the drowsiness from his eyes, becoming increasingly aware of the hard surface pressed into his face. One of his wings felt sore from its crumpled angle down the side of his stool while the other he realised was across Ranboo who was still acquainted with his desk, arms circled around Michael. Tommy grumbled but became aware of the fact he didn't want to immediately steal Michael from Ranboo's arms, rather he was content to let them rest for the meanwhile.

Tommy rose from his chair, the only indicator the lanky boy was alive was the muffled complaints as he removed his wing that was acting as a blanket. Tommy stepped out of the cramped space and into the centre of the room, reaching one of his arms up as he stretched, wings extending as far as they could without knocking anything to loosen themselves up.

"Nice rest?" Tubbo commented from his desk, a series of recipes stacked beside his idea book, a small sketch of a long, sealed tube.

Tommy spun to face the shorter boy, chiding himself for his lack of inattentiveness at the ram-hybrid's location, but that could be because he trusted Tubbo not to do something stupid.

"How long have I been out for?"

"Around two hours I think, it's currently 2:30 pm."

Tommy nodded, "I'm gonna head downtown to get them some things to change into, along with some other basic stuff."

Tubbo closed his page and stood up, "Ranboo and I can do the boring stuff if you wanna take them to a clothes store."

Tommy nodded, strolling over and extracting a sleeping Michael from Ranboo's arms before Tubbo shook the poor guy awake- who promptly teleported to the other side of the room by accident from the sudden waking, purple particles fluttering down before disappearing to Philza

knows where.

Tubbo snorted and waved at him, “come on, we’re going shopping for the little guy.”

“Could’ve at least given me a warning.”

“I did.”

“Shaking me awake out of nowhere doesn’t count.”

“Sure, it does,” Tommy added from the doorway he’d retreated to.

“You try being shaken awake then!” Ranboo complained as he stretched himself out.

“Is that a challenge?” Tommy’s tone was playfully sharp in a ‘Do it, I dare you’ type of way.

“No,” Ranboo quickly corrected, he’d rather not get into a fight with a literal vigilante that managed to outrun heroes that ranked in the top ten and could out maneuverer the number one hero.

“Good,” Tommy grinned, satisfied with Ranboo’s answer before he turned to Tubbo, “see you soon, Big T.”

Tommy had avoided all forms of public transport on his way to the shops, opting to walk than be in a crowded environment with Michael, who Tommy wasn’t quite sure on how well they did with other people.

Michael clung onto his upper torso as they walked through the shopping mall, Tommy’s wings no longer visible. Tommy supported Michael with both hands but one supported most of the weight for if he was suddenly required to spring into action. One could never be too sure.

The pair soon came across a clothing store, the one Tubbo had recommended for children’s clothing range saying that Ranboo and he would go buy anything else Michael would potentially need. His roommates had then proceeded to conveniently teleport away, which always served as a reminder on the fact that he could never enjoy the luxuries of teleportation. But they couldn’t fly so he called it more than even in his favour. He wouldn’t give up flying for something as measly as *teleportation*, ok, *maybe he was being a bit salty*, Ranboo’s abilities were cool after all he supposed.

He was brought out of his musings by a gentle tug on his shirt, looking down to the small child in his arms Michael gestured to a row of little dresses. Tommy didn’t comment on the choice, Michael could wear whatever the hell they wanted so long as they were happy with it.

Tommy placed Michael down on the floor, following after them as they wandered over to the ‘little girl’s clothes’ section, *Ranboo would have a field day with that, fucking sexist losers*.

Tommy could easily pick up the little flops of Michael’s worn-out crocs hitting the laminate flooring of the shop as they made their way over to a little pink dress with strawberries on it, it looked a little like the actual one but except without the extreme V-neck, the other, adult one had possessed, though Tommy was never sure why that was.

Michael pointed to the pink dress and Tommy happily pulled it off the clothes rack, holding it up against Michael to gauge the sizing, it looked like it’d fit alright. Michael made a quiet little happy

squeal and bounced around. Tommy's eyes scanned the row of many colours, his attention catching on a pastel yellow dress decorated in sunflower patterns, he added it to the pile.

On their way around the shop and towards the changing room located at the back the pair added numerous different clothing items to their haul, to the point where Tommy had to get a basket. As they arrived at the counter towards the back the worker looked up at them cheerfully, "trying on some new things or returning items?"

"We're just here to try on some things," Tommy replied, though his voice lacked his usual flamboyant energy.

The worker nodded, passing them a tag, "hang this next to the stall you're using."

Tommy nodded, taking the tag from their hand, "thank you," he added before gesturing Michael over to one of the rooms.

Michael made his way over to a stall and Tommy hung the selected items on the available hangers, "do you want me to help or are you a big kid?"

"I'm a big kid! I wanna do it myself!"

Michael cheered, ushering Tommy out, Tommy laughed and sat by the curtained entrance on the small stool, hooking the tag on the handle to the side of the curtained-off entrance.

As Tommy sat idly he watched as a brown-haired woman who distinctly smelled like roses, exited the only other stall in use out of the four they had in store, she seemed to like the pantsuit she was carrying as she exited the changing room corridor only to have to avoid running into a particularly hasty woman.

"Sorry, ma'am," she muttered as the lady almost trampled them as they exited.

"Watch where you're doing," she grunted before muttering, "youth these days."

The hasty woman approached where Tommy was sitting, reaching for the curtain to Michael's stall before Tommy stood and blocked her motion with his arm.

"Apologises miss but this stall is occupied," he informed, stepping further in front of the curtain from this woman's seemingly thoughtless behaviour.

The woman scoffed before turning to another stall and harshly tugging the curtain across, his ears picked up the faint utterings of, "what a creep."

Tommy withheld his complaints as Michael poked their head from behind the curtain, timidly stepping out in view.

Tommy smiled and crouched down to their height, "you look lovely Michael, how do you like it?"

Michael beamed, "pretty colours" they agreed as they scrunched the pastel pink fabric under their hands.

"Did you give it a spin?"

Michael shook their head before twirling around, squealing in delight as the skirt flared out in a circle around them, dotted strawberries sparkling from the light's reflection.

Tommy nodded approvingly and gave a thumbs up. Michael grinned and returned into the change

room to try on another item.

Michael was onto the final item of clothing the pair had picked out, happily twirling around in the sunflower dress Tommy had selected when the woman from before emerged from her changing room.

She tossed a glance over to the occupant of the stall and scoffed, “of course such a freak would wear such unsightly things, such a poor boy, your parents should be ashamed of themselves!”

Tommy’s eyes narrowed as Michael shrunk in on themselves from what Tommy assumed was the entire situation, the yelling and the mentioning of their parents.

“Excuse me-” Tommy tried but was cut off by the woman raising her voice over his own.

“And you too, the irresponsibility to leave you two by yourselves, it’s no wonder our society is so riddled with mistakes from the poor choices of those so simply uninformed of the consequences of their actions. I can’t believe I have to be the bigger person here; I’m just trying to do my shopping and here you two are making an absolute fool of yourselves.”

Tommy could tell she was full of herself; he could also tell he was about five seconds from strangling her if she continued to speak shit about his *child*.

Before he could take a step forward and actually do anything the worker from the counter rounded the corner, “I heard yelling, what seems to be the problem?”

Michael tugged his pant leg, directing his attention to them as the woman began her spiel about how the youth these days were clearly out of touch with reality.

Michael pointed up at the coat hangers where they’d reattached all the items, Tommy nodded and collected them, folding them over one of his arms, “I’ll help you get changed back, alright?”

Michael nodded and visibly relaxed, turning and shuffling back into the change rooms with a highly pissed Tommy following behind and closing the curtain.

Tommy could hear the woman ranting outside to the poor employee who’d been dragged into the lady’s shit, he highly suspected they weren’t paid enough for this.

As Tommy helped Michael put their shirt back on, he heard the woman scoff and storm off away from the change rooms after the employee hadn’t seemed to agree on the close-minded crap she’d been spouting.

What an asshole.

Clearly, this hadn’t been one of his best ideas, going to the shops with Michael while he was still on ‘fuck off world this is my kid’ mode. Eh, he’d complain about it later.

Michael did another spin, though this time back in their pants so the material didn’t swish out like it had in the dresses, they huffed and handed over the sunflower dress on the hanger, “!j::L·T. T.||” (pretty) they cheered.

Tommy nodded and slid the curtains open, holding Michael’s hand with his spare arm (the other had basically become a makeshift clothing rack), they walked past the worker again, Michael giving a little wave.

“I’m so sorry about the trouble,” they apologised.

Tommy shook his head, “not your fault at all, dunno what their problem was.”

The worker just released a quiet laugh, “apparently it’s contagious, I get one at least once a week.”

“Ouch, surely you don’t get paid enough for that,” Tommy commented as the pair started to depart to the front of the store where the checkout was.

The worker laughed and gave an acknowledging wave, which Tommy attempted to return with his clothing rack arm.

Tommy handed over the cash to pay as the employee removed the clothes hangers and placed them into a fabric bag decorated with flowers that Michael had seen and taken a liking to. Tommy thanked them and went to pick up the bag, though his actions were halted as the lady from before called out to him.

“Hey! Don’t ignore me, boy.”

Tommy grunted and picked the bag up, well intent on doing just that, ignoring her.

He gently took Michael’s hand and attempted to lead them out of the serving area and out of the store before he felt Michael’s body being tugged from his grasp.

“Hey there little buddy, are you sure you have a good home to go back to?”

Tommy’s body reacted automatically from his years of vigilantism, swinging the floral-patterned bag right into the woman’s face who had slightly bent down to say something or other he didn’t catch to Michael.

The woman’s grasp on Michael’s arm was released and he spared no time in scooping them into his arms where they buried their head into his blue jumper that read ‘Sunday’.

He could faintly hear a staff member trying to calm the situation, but the words were lost on his ears as his ear feathers flared while his focus pinned solely on the woman. The lady rubbed her face, looking positively livid at ‘the nerve he possessed to attack her’.

“How dare you! No wonder the poor child is speech-impaired when surrounded by such idiocy, this ludicrous behaviour has to be halted and I’ll be damned if I didn’t do my job as a caring mother to prevent the suffering of that boy.”

The woman stepped forward, the bag she held in her spare hand becoming enveloped in winding vines dotted with flower buds that slowly started to open. A faintly visible pink dust rose from them and spread outward, Tommy lightly pressed Michael closer, he’d rather not let him inhale it.

Tommy’s posture had shifted to a defensive stance, he noticed staff and customers watching had appeared to become fatigued as the dust spread. The woman lunged forward, reaching for Michael. Tommy shifted backwards, sweeping her foot and watching as she fell backwards with hidden satisfaction.

The woman made a noise of complaint, lifting herself off the floor and progressing forward on him again, to the point where he backed up out of the store, the people in the surrounding area slumped over in various positions.

Agro-Karen swung her bag at him, Tommy having to duck to the side due to his hands currently supporting Michael's body weight and keeping him upright.

That's when he heard it, the sound of footsteps coming towards the open shop front. The woman had obviously not, she lunged again, the vines only encircling her bag more. Tommy admittedly should have been paying more attention to his surroundings but between actively watching the crazy lady and trying to locate where the mall's security was coming from, he may have had a small lapse in concentration.

Hence why when she next swung her nest-like bag at him he ended up sprawled on the floor from stepping backwards into a support pillar. The woman looked as if she was about to kick him *quite literally* when he was down before a rush of wind alerted him to another presence.

A crow swooped past, snagging the lady's bag and instantly dissipating the dust, followed by a figure dropping down from literally fucking nowhere (probably the second floor). Tommy twisted automatically, Michael covered by him and facing the pillar.

He wasn't sure if he was completely present, *he really shouldn't have come today*.

Complaints rose from the woman he could no longer see as he presumed someone placed her in restraints. Two other pairs of footsteps arrived, rushing over to the person with the lady.

"Hey mate, are you alright?"

Tommy's ear feathers perked up in surprise, he could recognise that voice from anywhere despite never having actually interacted with the hero, *it was Philza*.

Tommy slightly turned, Michael still out of view, the piglin-hybrid in question vaguely waking from the slight inhalation of whatever the hell that dust was. Tommy could now see the hero crouched a few small paces away from him, smiling gently at him with his famous smile that was well-known by anyone he helped.

Tommy's shoulders slightly lost their tension, a quiet anxious trill being released as he fully turned around, now positioned in a slight crouch, Michael securely resting against his chest, gripping his jumper's fabric. Tommy could feel them shaking ever so slightly, he combed his fingers through Michael's puffy pink hair with the hand that was supporting their head.

Philza blinked back at him in surprise, for either the fact there was a child or the fact he just chirped.

Philza replied back with a reassuring coo, *ah*, so it was the bird noise, *where did they fucking come from?*

He'd never done it before but *apparently* as soon as he steals a kid, they just show up out of nowhere, *rude*, they could've at least given him some warning, so he didn't make himself look like an idiot in front of his idol.

Philza reached forward slowly, his hands visible but Tommy couldn't help but flinch away, rising from his crouch to having his back against the pillar.

"Mate, it's alright, I promise, I'll stay over here if it helps," Philza smiled softly, his wings gently

shifting with the motions of the hero's breath, "can you answer a few questions for me?"

Tommy eyed him warily but nodded, Philza clearly recognised his behaviour as defensive. Tommy idly wondered if Philza got all possessive like he did whenever people hurt the ones he cared about, but then he imagined an actually pissed off Philza and preferred to imagine otherwise. He'd like to stay on the man's good side, *thanks*.

"I assume you're a minor, so you won't have to be subjected to an official interrogation, just something to help me understand what happened, alright?"

Tommy nodded again.

"But I need you to come with me, okay?"

Tommy tensed, arms tightening his hold on Michael, his ear feathers pressed themselves down, "can I keep them with me?"

Philza nodded, "of course."

Tommy now found himself walking beside the hero on their way out of the mall, the two security officers escorting the lady a few paces to his right. She'd begun to finally take in what was fully happening to her and had once again resumed her verbal barrage upon Tommy and Michael, making his eyes narrow while he twisted Michael's view away from her.

Philza aided in this with one of his wings, raising it between them though Tommy had to shuffle slightly closer to get the full effects of the feathered screen.

"Thanks," Tommy mumbled, resting his face into Michael's curls.

"No problem, kiddo," Philza smiled that warm smile that Tommy was having a hard time not being comforted by as he looked up at him from the corner of his eye.

He couldn't even find the energy to protest at the terminology the hero had used like he usually would, instead he just breathed a content 'mrrph' in reply.

Tommy sat in the local police station on one of the chairs in front of the receptionist's desk waiting for Philza to call him in from another room. He was anxiously bouncing Michael on his knee as he stared at the clock, watching it tick, it was now 4:30 pm. He'd already sent a message to Tubbo saying he'd be held up, though he hadn't specified why and Tubbo hadn't questioned him.

"Kid?" Philza's voice reached his ears as the hero in question stepped out from one of the rooms while the woman was being moved to another room by the security team, clearly still resisting if the profanities he could hear were any indication.

Tommy rose and kept Michael close to his chest, sitting on the offered chair opposite to where the winged hero sat after he'd closed the door.

"I'm just going to ask you some basic questions, alright?"

"Am I being charged with assault?" Tommy instead asked.

"As it currently is we don't have reason to press charges against you though when looking through

the shop's security cameras we do have to ask some questions.”

“Alright...”

Phil did feel slightly bad for having to ‘interrogate’ the kid (who they'd found lying on the ground protecting a child as he was getting harassed by some lady), one who he'd just realised now he hadn't gotten the name of. The boy looked anxious enough, constantly fidgeting but arms never straying far from the younger child he held as if someone was going to take them away from the older boy.

“What's your name?”

“Tommy.”

“Last name?”

“Innit.”

“Innit?”

“It's my last name.”

“Innit's your last name?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You don't need to call me sir, Tommy.”

The kid in front of him slightly tensed at his name, “okay, Philza.”

“So, from your perspective, what happened?”

“Well, uh,” Tommy's eyes scanned the room as if looking for something before they returned to him.

“I hit her with my shopping bag,” he sheepishly started, gesturing to the floral bag that Phil could vaguely see was filled with clothes.

“What happened before that?”

“Well, she uh- oh, yeah, she was shit-talking me and Michael when we were in the change rooms, I spoke with the employee after that, I said they didn't get paid enough for what they deal with and I'm probably right.”

“Ah, seems she failed to mention that part.”

Tommy nodded though Phil asked another question, “what started the fight?”

“Well, I did hit her with my bag.”

“Why then instead of before?”

“Well, I didn't have my bag before- no, she just hadn't tried to take Michael from me.”

“Ah,” it made sense to him now, judging from the feathers behind the kid's ears he made the

logical assumption that Tommy was in fact an avian, one that had previously been very defensive of the kid he was holding and the mindset Phil had similarly sometimes found himself in inherently hadn't faded. Tommy's actions would match, the constant surveillance of their surroundings and the fluffed feathers at the back of his ears.

Phil would rather not stress him further out or an actual fight might start.

"Well," he paused, taking in the pair before them, a soft smile settling on his face, "you're free to go, thank you for your co-operation, Tommy."

Tommy nodded, standing from the chair and went to twist the doorknob, "will you be alright getting home?"

Tommy paused before nodding wordlessly before pausing again, "thanks."

And then the kid was gone.

Tommy didn't rush out of the station, that would only make him look suspicious, instead, he carefully made his way out. He intended to never be in one of the rooms again, it was awful, despite how awesome Philza was he couldn't shake the feeling he was being watched.

"He said 'Tommy Innit' correct?"

Phil turned as an officer walked through the door, a clipboard of notes written in actually legible writing.

"That he did," Phil answered, getting off the seat and walking over to where the officer gestured to a computer, one that was currently displaying civilian files.

The words 'Tommy Innit' were written in the search bar though none of the top results had a name similar.

"Are there any other spellings?"

The officer shook his head, "we've already been trying, no clue how to spell 'Innit' though, this was the best assumption we could make."

"What about the kid?"

"You didn't manage to get his last name so we couldn't hope to trace him."

Phil nodded, "this is quite strange- unless he intentionally gave out the wrong information?"

"Sasha was with us behind the one-way-glass, she didn't pick up any falsehoods."

Phil sighed, "well, not much we can do now, he's not a wanted criminal so I guess he has that going for him."

"Is there anything you want to do?"

"Not sure there's anything we *can* do," Phil just pressed a hand to his temple, "I'll ask around I suppose, though I doubt I'll get anything."

“As you wish,” the officer nodded and returned to their area of the police station while Philza made his way out.

He’d only been around the area for one of his rare daylight patrols to help give the public a sense of security knowing that they were looking out for them, he just hadn’t expected to deal with an unknown person’s case.

Tommy returned home to a concerned looking Tubbo and a napping Ranboo, the latter lounging across the entire couch with his lanky body.

“What kept you?” Tubbo asked as he approached, Tommy didn’t flinch away, letting Tubbo approach him and Michael.

“Got into a fight with a Karen,” Tommy grumbled.

Tubbo laughed at that, “don’t you literally work in customer service??”

Tommy smiled a little, “yeah but Puffy can’t stop me from smacking some stuck-up lady with a bag.”

“Oh, my *Philza*, you hit her with a bag??” Tubbo was laughing at this point, eliciting quiet chuckle from Tommy. He was glad to know his mannerisms were rubbing off on his roommates, just like the fuck’s so-called ‘communication skills’ had on him.

Chapter 12: No, I Don't Consider That a Problem

Chapter Summary

Michael's settling in just fine, but things have been happening outside Tommy's little world.

TW: Panic Attack

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy rose to the constant tossing and turning of Michael, who was nestled to his side under his wing, sharing the pop-up mattress with him easily due to his small stature.

Tommy reached for their hair, gently running this fingers through it in an attempt to calm the young child.

Michael shifted again but stilled against his side, curling back up. Tommy drew them closer, resting an arm over them, his eyes glancing at the red glow from the alarm clock that read, '2:32 am'.

Tommy woke before his alarm, the red numbers now displaying '4:59 am', he rolled away from the sleeping bundle on his side and hit the 'stop' button as it flashed to '5:00 am'. Michael made a noise of complaint as their heat source was removed as Tommy got up, getting changed for the day before a thought crossed his mind, *what was he going to do with Michael?*

He wondered if Puffy would let them stay the day either in the main area or in the backroom, he thought back to his roommates' schedules, Ranboo would be out most of the day at his fancy hero headquarters job that was either the stupidest or smartest idea Ranboo had when he applied for their intern program. It was almost comical, an accomplice to a wanted vigilante interning under the country's largest hero organisation. Tubbo had lessons with Combustion today if he remembered correctly, which would serve as a problem.

So, he'd just have to take Michael with him, hopefully, Puffy would let them just chill around the shop, he doubted Michael would get up to trouble. Besides, it wasn't like Puffy actively hated children... *she did save him from a life on the streets after all.*

Ranboo looked at him in a mix of disbelief and complete acceptance of the scenario the ender-hybrid had been faced with.

Tommy was at the counter, spoon-feeding Michael cereal with 'here comes the aeroplane' as he also packed his bag for work.

"M'what?" Tommy mumbled between a mouthful of his own breakfast, zipping up his bag and watching as Michael happily clapped a sporadic rhythm at the ender-hybrid, their sunflower dress

flowing over most of the counter.

“Nothing... just nothing,” Ranboo sighed, sliding the box of cereal towards himself as he sat down.

Tommy passed him a bowl and a spoon, watching in mild hate as the ender-hybrid poured in the milk before the cereal.

“Sometimes I just hate you, y’know,” Tommy commented, going back to attending to Michael (even though Michael could eat by himself).

Ranboo chittered in mild distress, “why?? It tastes the same.”

“Of course, you’d think that.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?!”

“It means your sense of taste is a disgrace to all things edible.”

“You literally dip chips in ice cream.”

“So? It tastes good, you should try it sometime instead of that,” Tommy glared at Ranboo’s bowl with disgust, “*thing*.”

Ranboo just sighed and took a spoonful of his food before looking up at him again, watching as Michael used the bowl like a cup, gaining a milk moustache in the process, “don’t you have work?”

Tommy glanced at his watch, noticing in alarm that his shift started in 15 minutes, “aw shit, c’mon Michael we gotta roll out.”

Ranboo vwooped in alarm as Michael put the bowl down and rolled off the counter where they’d been sitting. Tommy quickly catching them and huffing, “not what I meant but ok.”

Tommy pushed open the backdoor to the store, stepping inside the café’s back room with Michael playing with the small feathers behind his ears while Tommy carried him with one arm. He placed down his bag held in his other hand on the counter, pulling his apron from its pocket. He sat Michael down next to his bag, tugging the apron over his head as Puffy walked through the back door.

He heard her pause as she registered that there was a small child sitting on the counter, “Tommy...” Puffy started as Tommy turned towards her, tying his apron behind him.

He laughed nervously, “hey Puffy.”

Puffy sighed, “you know you can’t steal children?”

“What- no, I didn’t steal the child-”

“There’s a child on the counter.”

“Yeah,” Tommy nodded, gesturing to Michael.

“Do you not see anything weird about this? You suddenly showing up with a child?”

“Uh... no...”

Puffy sighed her ‘why are you like this?’ sigh and glanced over to Michael who was playing with a white feather.

“Is that hygienic?”

“Is what hygienic?”

“That feather?”

“Are you calling me unhygienic, because I have you know big men are very hygienic, and I am a big man.”

“What? Wait, where’s the feather from?”

“Oh,” Tommy paused realising what Puffy was asking, “it’s from my wings.”

“You have wings?”

“Why do you sound so surprised?”

“I didn’t know you had wings?”

“Man, you’re like Wil, he didn’t think I had wings either, tried to get me to show him too, weirdo.”

“Ah, I mean, I’ve never seen your wings and I’ve known you for around 8 years now.”

Tommy stuttered in his next sentence, his words coming out a series of jumbled words before he belatedly asked, “has it really been that long?”

Puffy’s eyes softened, she lifted her hand and ruffled Tommy’s hair, “it has indeed, now c’mon, we should open, mini-you can stay on one of the tables as long as they don’t start a fire.”

Tommy grinned, plucking Michael back up and carrying them to the main area where Puffy walked over to the front door and flipped the sign over so it read ‘Open’.

He placed Michael down at one of the tables, “I’ll go get some colouring in things for you, alright?”

Michael beamed and Tommy felt something warm stir in his chest.

“Hey Tommy,” Wilbur greeted easily as he walked through the door catching the teen’s attention.

Tommy turned his gaze from Michael to Wilbur, moving over to the register to type in the man’s regular order.

Wilbur’s gaze trailed over to Michael, “who’s the mini child?”

“Michael,” Tommy answered, pressing a few buttons on the touchscreen, “usual?”

Wilbur nodded, “and you found them where?”

Tommy grumbled but noticed Puffy had disappeared into the backrooms, most likely to wait for Niki’s delivery.

“They’re distant family,” he explained, moving over to the coffee machine as Wilbur nodded, though Tommy noticed he lacked his usual energy and seemed to be supporting darker eye bags than his normal designer ones.

Tommy blinked then glanced back up at the man in front of the counter again, racking his brain to come up with why the man was down, “how’s George?”

“He’s recovering well, broke a good couple of bones though so he’ll probably be taking it easy for a while,” Wilbur sighed.

“What’d he manage to do anyway?”

“Took a pretty big fall the other day during one of his shifts, though you didn’t hear it from me for work-related legal reasons.”

“Oh damn, hope he recovers well,” Tommy wasn’t sure what he was expecting when he asked but it certainly wasn’t that type of a response.

Puffy exited through the breakroom’s door, carrying a crate of freshly baked pastries.

“How’s Dream?” Tommy voiced as he handed Wilbur his drink and took the exchanged money.

Puffy looked up at him in surprise before over to Wilbur accusingly, “what?” the brunette exclaimed, raising his hands in a form of surrender.

“He’s doing alright, why?” Puffy informed as she slide the pastries into their allocated windows.

“Well, George is in hospital right, was he able to see him?”

Tommy faintly noticed Wilbur wince at his comment from in his periphery vision, he watched as Puffy glared at Wilbur again.

Said man sputtered before clarifying, “I was with Tommy when they called me.”

“Ah,” Puffy turned back to Tommy, all ‘Puffy disappointment’ disappeared.

“After a bit Dream could see him, but I’ve been having to drag the dumbass home to take care of himself,” Puffy elaborated with no real sting behind her words.

“That does sound like him,” Wilbur added and Tommy nodded along, despite having only met Dream in person twice once.

Puffy huffed and Tommy opted to change the subject as Puffy finished lining the shelves with Niki’s freshly baked pastries.

“Did you end up collecting Bella and Roxy after all?”

The question caught Puffy off guard and she blinked back up at him, “oh, yeah, I did in fact, they’ve just been socialising at home though they’ve been a bit lonely recently with everyone away for longer hours.”

Tommy nodded, “can they join the café?”

Puffy nodded, “but I need to get a little dog fence to set up for them first.”

“Fair enough,” Tommy agreed as he wiped one of the nozzles on the coffee machine.

Wilbur nodded towards Michael who was currently scribbling in a pink crayon, “can I sit with him?”

Tommy grumbled but Wilbur made no move to change his mind as he sat down on a chair opposite to the toddler, well Tommy did move from behind the counter and over to their table.

“Don’t be an ass, Wil,” Tommy complained, crouching down beside Michael’s chair.

Wilbur laughed and shook his head, though a soft smile crept onto his face while Michael looked over at Tommy in confusion. Tommy in turn shook his head, “ignore him, Michael.”

“I doubt you’d be able to do that yourself for long, Tommy,” Wilbur snarked, grinning at him.

“I could totally ignore you *if I wanted to.*”

“Yeah, but you love me too much to do that.”

“You’re such a fucking weirdo, whatever, Wilbur,” Tommy rolled his eyes but got up from his spot.

Tapping Michael’s shoulder reassuringly, “he won’t hurt you, he’s a friend,” Tommy mumbled quietly but Wilbur picked it up anyway, his smile only widening, his previously sagged shoulders perking up in just the slightest.

It was around 6:15 am when they got the first customer that wasn’t Wilbur and his weird early risings. A woman with bright orange hair made her way through the glass door, her boots clicking on the wooden vinyl tiles. Wilbur briefly glanced up at the woman before continuing to colour the drawing Michael had given him.

Tommy noticed a scar running up a quarter of her face and idly reached up to his face, trailing his fingers lightly over the almost faded scab on his own face.

“Good morning,” the lady greeted, pulling her purse from her bag.

“Morning, what can I get you?” Tommy inquired, moving from his spot at the baked goods cabinet where he’d been leaning on to talk with Wilbur.

“A medium caramel latte please,” the woman answered, pressing her card to the payment terminal as Tommy entered her order.

Tommy nodded and moved to the coffee machine, adding a pump of caramel sauce to the milk in the pitcher as he heated it.

He wordlessly completed her order before sliding it to her, “here you are.”

“Thanks,” she took the lidded cup and went to exit the store, only pausing when a more familiar face entered.

A grumbled, “what’s your problem?” left her lips as she hurried past the man who only rolled his eyes and walked up to the counter.

“Eyup, Quack-Myster,” Tommy grinned, “what’s up with her?”

“I dunno man, I think she’s convinced I’m stalking her or something because I keep seeing her

around,” Quackity shrugged while Tommy nodded.

“I’ll never understand the ways of a woman,” Tommy solemnly agreed, getting a chuckle out of the man in front of him.

“What are you doing here alone anyways, aren’t you usually always with Schlatt?”

“Schlatt’s been flat out recently, I was just in the area and thought I’d drop in, everyone’s been all over the place, so I thought it’d been nice to take a break.”

Tommy nodded, typing in Quackity’s regular order, “Cappuccino?”

Quackity smiled, sliding his card over.

“Though I do ask why you chose to take a break on basically the opposite side of the city, you getting away from it all?” Tommy added.

“Sort of, I was visiting a friend that lives around here, you might know him, he runs a local cake store?”

“Ah, do you mean Karl?”

Quackity grinned, “that’s the guy.”

Tommy nodded, “Niki told me about him, they like to meet up and bake together when they’re free.”

“Damn, I didn’t know Niki lived around here too, I’ll have to swing by sometime,” Quackity pulled out his phone and typed himself a reminder before a notification flashed on the top of his screen.

Quackity sighed but tucked his phone away, “thanks, Tommy,” Quackity grinned as he took his card and cappuccino from Tommy.

“I assume you gotta dip?”

Quackity hummed in agreement, “I’ll be sure to drop by again soon, we need to have a proper catch up sometime, yeah?”

Tommy knocked his knuckles against Quackity’s held out ones in a goodbye gesture.

The rest of the day was a steady stream of customers, Michael was content to draw by themselves and Tommy made sure to walk past every now and then to check on them. At one point he noticed a scribbled drawing of a winged figure with gold crayon lines as hair. Tommy had ruffled his kid’s hair and sat with them for a while until he had to serve another customer.

All in all, it was a pretty alright day with not many hitches, except for the usual Karen who this time around complained about the temperature of her drink, *like sorry miss, it’s not as if it’s a consistent temperature that most coffee shops adhere to, you could’ve just waited for it to cool.*

Wilbur had left around 7:30, which was later than he usually stayed and he had said he would’ve happily stayed longer if he didn’t have something to do (he had seemed pretty bummed about leaving too).

Puffy walked up to him in the backroom as Tommy untied his apron, “as much as I loved seeing

Michael are you sure they shouldn't be at some sort of daycare?"

Tommy chuckled albeit nervously, "nah, Michael's to pog for that."

He didn't mention he probably couldn't afford to send Michael to daycare and he'd feel bad if he asked Tubbo to give him the money for it. There was also the fact of Michael's legal existence, he was technically a missing child, *though Tommy heavily doubted his actual mother would give a shit about his disappearance*. Something that thoroughly pissed him off, Michael was such a lovable child.

Puffy only sighed and gently touched his shoulder before heading out the back door, "alright, see you around, Tommy, make sure you lock the door on your way out."

Tommy pushed the door open with his leg as he carried Michael inside, locking the door before walking down the hallway into the living room, narrowly avoiding an oddly walking Ranboo who emerged from the kitchen.

Tommy paused, watching his roommate for a second before calling out to Tubbo, "is he all Zombie mode again?"

Tubbo's yelled reply of, "yeah, he's been like this since when he got home," reached his ears from their hobbies room. Tommy crossed the area between the living room and the kitchen and entered the room's hallway, entering their gadgets room quickly after.

Tubbo glanced up at his arrival, moving from his chair and over to the pair.

"He came home out of it so as a precaution I put up the ability-suppressants that are already set up around the house that we usually use, they've proved to work well enough so far, he was like this a few minutes later and has just been wandering around since," Tubbo informed as he steadily reached a hand up to Michael who squeaked happily and grabbed a hold of one of Tubbo's fingers.

Tommy nodded, running his fingers through Michael's hair and turning to see Ranboo standing in front of the glass door that led to their balcony, a light downpour visible from where Tommy was standing.

"How was your internship?"

Tubbo blinked at Tommy, "are you feeling alright?"

Tommy half-heartedly glared, "I ask you about your day... occasionally..."

"Uh-huh, usually only when you want something."

"I take maximum offence to that."

"Right, well, if you actually want to know it was pretty cool, Combustion showed everyone one of his prototype robots which sort of looks a little dodgy as it is because it wasn't working properly but he said when it's finished it should be able to compact itself into some sort of object with either a camera or an audio recording device."

"Yo that's actually kinda cool, I'm glad you managed to intern with him after all, you were all over the place for no reason when you were waiting for the interview results."

Tubbo elbowed him, "I was nervous ok, this *is* Combustion, after all, he's pretty cool."

Tommy grinned, “I can tell you’re a fanboy you don’t need to word it subtly.”

“Hey! I don’t poke fun at you for your Philza worship, so don’t poke fun at me for my appreciation of someone who’s amazing at what they do.”

“Wow, that’s low Tubbo, even for you.”

“Your expectations of me are too high, I’ve quite shoken, you clearly don’t know me as well as I thought you did.”

“I know you amazingly well thanks, I was there when you fell off that merry-go-round after all.”

“We do not speak of such things.”

“S::T. ·J!J” (art man) Michael imputed with an oink, Tubbo laughed but Tommy turned back to Ranboo who was reaching for the glass door’s handle.

“Oi, Ranboo,” Tommy snapped, stepping forward but stopping as Ranboo backed off from the door, retreating back into the kitchen.

“That’s a bit odd, he doesn’t usually try to go outside,” Tubbo commented, moving past Tommy and down the hallway into their living room, Tommy following shortly after.

“Is it because it’s raining?” Tommy tried as he watched zombie Ranboo fiddle around with the tap’s lever before managing to flick it on, subsequently splashing himself with stray water droplets.

The ender-hybrid violently flinched back, his hand holding his arm where the droplets touched his skin as he rapidly blinked, his pupils dilating back to their usual red and green heterochromia as opposed to the glowing purple.

Tubbo rushed into the kitchen and Tommy’s wings were out, blocking Michael’s vision of Ranboo as Tommy looked over the counter at where Tubbo had switched the tap off and was trying to coax Ranboo into looking at his arm.

“W-Where am I?” the dual-toned boy asked, his voice awfully small and confused.

“You’re at home, you’re safe, Ranboo, I’m right here, Tommy’s here, everything’s okay, alright?”

Ranboo silently nodded, his breathing notably irregular so Tommy stepped around the counter looking over to Tubbo questioningly. Tubbo only looked at him in confusion, ‘let me’ Tommy mouthed before holding Michael out to Tubbo who wordlessly nodded and took Michael from his grasp.

Tommy turned to Ranboo who had backed himself into the corner of their kitchen, “hey Boo boy, it’s just me okay,” he announced quietly, hands visible to the hybrid as Tommy approached, wings calmly folded behind him.

“I’m going to need you to breath with me, can you do that?” Tommy stopped in front of Ranboo who looked as if he was trying to fold in on himself. Ranboo shakily nodded and Tommy offered a hand to him which he slowly took, Ranboo allowing his hand to be placed on Tommy’s chest. Tommy took a breath and let it fill his lungs, taking care in making his breathing visible to Ranboo.

Tommy’s breaths were steady and continuous, slowly Ranboo’s breathing began to match his own, the slightly older boy’s posture becoming less tense as he became more aware of his surroundings.

Tommy gently removed Ranboo's hand when he felt the hybrid's breathing had settled, instead manoeuvring his arm so he could see where the water droplets landed.

Tommy internally grimaced, a few splotch-like markings had appeared, as if he'd been burned but Tommy knew for a fact that the tap was on cold and even if it hadn't been there was no way their tap's heating system was that efficient. He turned Ranboo's arm over, finding no other markings from the water aside from the ones scattered on their inner arm.

Tommy knew Ranboo could touch water, he'd seen him wash up numerous times, so it didn't seem to be a side-effect of his ability, but it could be due to whatever zombie-mode Ranboo entered occasionally. Tommy wasn't sure but this was something they could figure out in the future, they just had to be a bit more careful of it when Ranboo inevitably entered his weird state again.

"Are you alright?"

Tommy blinked up at Ranboo, "you're asking *me* that?"

"Well, you are kind of just staring at me funny," Ranboo answered and Tommy only sighed.

"You're an idiot," Tommy grumbled though his perked-up ear-feathers betrayed his true feelings.

"Can I—" Ranboo paused, "Can I hug you...?"

Tommy scoffed but wrapped his arms around the taller, lanky teen, his wings soon following suit and encasing them both in soft striped feathers.

"Make sure you set a reminder to go grocery shopping tomorrow!" Tubbo yelled from their hobbies room as Tommy finished changing into his nightly gear.

"I swear it's your turn!" Tommy shouted back as he finally managed to get his final boot on.

"Nope!"

"You're going next week then!"

"Fineee," he heard Tubbo complain, *ha! So, the bitch was avoiding it*, he knew it.

Tommy flicked on his phone, intending to set himself a reminder, instead, the chat between him and Wilbur appeared, well, you couldn't really call it a chat considering it contained one message.

He's also forgotten to ask about said message today, he supposes there's always tomorrow, maybe Wilbur wouldn't be as down tomorrow too. But he has no idea why Wilbur would randomly send him a bunch of identifiers for someone, it's not like Tommy knew *that* many people.

And what the fuck was with, 'ask Dream?', he barely knew the guy.

Ranboo had agreed to watch Michael while Tommy was out, deciding to not go out for his usual afternoon information scouting he did when things were picking up in activity. Instead, he'd retreated to his desk and had started drawing with Michael on his lap happily blubbering away in words Ranboo could occasionally understand. Ranboo had explained Michael doesn't speak enderspeak as he does (which is what he called his journal language) but he said Michael speaks something close to it so he can pick up on the toddler's words here and there. Ranboo had also

been highly confused on how Tommy could even understand them at all, but Tommy had just as much of a clue. He'd ended up attributing it to his overall charms and amazingness.

As he sat atop a post in district 13, surveying the streets that lead into district 40, a voice came through his headset.

“Action spotted on Albury St in districts 40, 4 streets from your current location, looks like a knife fight.”

“Got it,” Tommy answered, dropping down and swinging himself forward from the pole with practised ease, shooting himself upwards with the aid of his wings.

The harsh winds had seemed to have disappeared; the rolling grey clouds were no longer present, but Tommy wasn't sure if the weather would stay that way during the week. A gentle breeze lifted Tommy over the single-story buildings of district 13 to the more rundown, abandoned buildings of district 40. Most places around here were a shell of their former self, the district never truly recovered after the major villain attack a few years back, sending one of the newer developed areas into a ghost town despite its proximity to more urbanised parts of the city.

Though Tommy was never alive when this area was in its prime, the attack occurring before he could have possibly hoped to have any interaction with the urbanised area as Rioteer. However, he had heard tales of magnificent plays that were performed in the main theatre from Puffy who had told him it was a place she'd visited a lot in her childhood. Multiple accounts of fraud reported by the media had seen the place's decline in popularity which lead to increased criminal activity as heroes were moved to other districts.

Tommy's eyes scanned the streets, he'd taken into occasionally patrolling this area after that.

A glint of metal caught his eye from the shadows of a ruined gas station, its roof having semi-collapsed and rusted long ago. He watched as two people lunged at each other, two blades sloppily clashing together, the woman's movements more defensive than the man's brash swings. The woman had managed to evade all of the man's strikes but had backed herself against the peeling wall of the gas station's front. The man grinned before pulling out a gun and raising it towards the woman.

Tommy dropped to the ground, “what's that thing they say, ‘don't bring a gun to a knife fight’, or something like that,” Tommy sarcastically pondered as he swept the man's legs and kicked the gun from his hands, the firearm sliding over to where the woman was as Tommy knelt down onto the man and searched his toolbelt for a zip tie.

“Are you alrig-” Tommy's question choked itself off as the woman now stood above his crouching form, gun pointed at his head.

“Hey hey, we can talk about this,” Tommy started, raising his hands in a panic, trying to think of a way he could manoeuvre himself off the man so he could regain his centre of balance to properly defend himself.

He could feel his ear feathers brush against the fabric hood of his signature jumper he wore over his protective gear, something Tubbo had taken great pride in. His feathers fluttered in alarm as he rolled to the side, preparing to take out his batons for close combat when he heard something cut through the air above him. A clang of metal before a dull thud, Tommy looked over to the wall to find a familiarly designed knife plunged into the wall with the simple handgun secured tightly, most likely never to function correctly again.

The woman glanced over to the perpetrator and Tommy did the same, almost having a heart attack when he noticed the wings before calming as the figure walked closer. This wasn't Philza, a hero who was probably actively hunting him down, this was Halo an acquaintance (and former unwilling mentor) who he'd met on happy accident and would occasionally see around. Tommy had always found his vigilante name amusing, Halo's ability made him look like that of a demon, but through the conversations they'd shared it was clear that Halo's kind-hearted personality very much outweighed their intimidating appearance. They had tried to dissuade a younger version of himself out of vigilante activities, after all. Too worried that Tommy would be putting himself at too much of a risk.

But Tommy would be lying if he said he wasn't the slightest bit intimidated by that very same vigilante right now. Halo's wings were flared and his tail swished angrily behind him though what chilled him the most was how level his voice was as he stalked towards them.

“Leave,” Halo uttered with the utmost amount of fury he'd seen the other vigilante possess, thinly veiled into the quiet whisper of a single word.

Tommy flinched as Halo took another step closer, the woman however had already turned tail and fled into the night, Halo paused and watched her go. His demeanour doing a complete 180 as his gaze travelled back to Tommy who was still half crouched, half sprawled on the ground. Halo stepped past him, retrieving his knife from the wall and letting the gun clatter harmlessly to the ground.

“Are you alright?” Halo asked, crouching down in front of Tommy, his tail finding Tommy's arm and curling gently around it.

“Yeah,” Tommy took a moment to mentally reassure himself, “Yeah, I'm good, doing great actually, completely, 100% okay.”

Halo huffed but smiled down at him, Halo's glowing red eyes finding his own blue ones despite the visor's glass.

“You've gotten some shades since I last saw you,” Halo grinned.

Tommy chuckled at that, “I have indeed.”

Halo's eyes crinkled with his smile as the older vigilante softly laughed, “how about we get you off the ground, and...,” he paused, glancing at the man lying face down.

“Maybe move them inside so they're not a complete target,” he finished, assisting Tommy up with his tail as he moved to pick up the man, depositing him inside the gas station's abandoned store walls.

“Now,” Halo's grin widened like it did whenever he was going to suggest something interesting.

“I am willing to bet you haven't got the slightest clue what's going on in the underground as of late,” Halo asked, receiving a shake of the head in reply.

“Excellent, I say this calls for a trip to The Loop,” Halo suggested, not at all subtly promoting the place Tommy was sure Halo's husband/friend worked at.

“That sounds like a highly clever and thoughtful and cool-” Tommy sheepishly paused at the confused glance, rubbing at the back of his neck, “yeah, okay, that sounds like a good plan.”

As they approached The Loop, located on the outer edges of district 14 which surrounded one half of district 40, Tommy noticed the two bodyguards, one who Tommy swore he'd seen before, most likely due to him having visited the underground before. Well, there were multiple 'undergrounds', underground areas being areas where people like him gathered to exchange information.

Undercover heroes and villains lurked as well, information was guarded and any gathered had to be taken with a grain of salt from the other party's truthfulness. Though there was an unspoken agreement between patrons of, 'as long as you don't do or say anything, I won't either' so typically arrests were uncommon unless the hero had an extreme reason. Tommy's seen a hero walk past him (in full vigilante gear mind you) and bluntly arrest another patron who Tommy had later found out was a terrorist group leader who had been on the run for several weeks prior to their arrest.

Tommy had to stop himself from colliding with Halo's back as the vigilante paused in front of him, sharing quiet words with one of the bodyguard's, the one who had trails of sparkling blue over his skin.

The bodyguard with bright blue hair smiled at Halo and nodded to his bodyguard partner, "I'm subbing with Spifey."

The bodyguard Halo had spoken with trailed after them as Halo entered the surprisingly well-kept club-like building. They walked past a dance floor where several civilian patrons seemed to be dancing, passing through another door where Halo gave a nod to the bartender who unlocked another door. The door led to a number of booths and another bar area, one that was surrounded by a more diverse crowd. Tommy recognised multiple vigilantes he'd both seen and occasionally worked with before as well as a few villains he recognised from Ranboo's information gathering.

Tommy watched as the bodyguard they were with walked over to someone who was similarly dressed, they exchanged words before the one he assumed was Spifey left to go stand outside.

The bodyguard returned, leaning casually on Halo who huffed at the gesture, but Tommy didn't miss the way his lips curved into an affectionate smile.

"Sup, Rioteer, haven't seen you here in a while," the bodyguard grinned.

At Tommy's puzzled glance from his recognition the bodyguard laughed, "most of the underground knows who you are."

"Damn, am I really that well-known?" Tommy laughed, his tone half joking half questioning.

"Yeah man, surprised the heroes only caught wind of you a few years ago, pretty sloppy of them if you ask me."

Tommy shrugged, "I mean, I've never been that subtle, y'know, with these and all," he gestured to his wings.

"I'd say I manage well with mine thank you very much," Halo added in mock offence.

"Yeah, you've always been great in that area. I'm a man of many things, subtly was unfortunately never one of them," Tommy grinned broadly, "so what brings you here tonight, Halo?"

Halo sighed, "nothing much, but this is Paragon."

"Ah, so you're the guy he keeps going on about, nice to meet you I guess."

Halo spluttered, "you muffinhead, I do not."

“Are you sure about that, Halo, I am pretty cool after all,” Paragon teased to which Halo sighed in defeat and Tommy laughed.

The rest of the night went along smoothly, the trio joking about whatever came to mind, Tommy didn’t really do much information gathering aside from the observation of patrons during his discussions. He caught word of at least one deal planned for another day though he didn’t catch the when or where, so he decided there was nothing he could do about it. Halo had appeared to be doing the same thing, enjoying their time with them but surveying the others for any information present. He wasn’t sure exactly why Halo had brought him despite not doing any active interrogations, but he did notice the increase in deal planning since he last snooped around in the underground. He also caught mentions of fire, though he had no clue what it was related to, *was arson really that popular nowadays?*

Tommy bid his goodbyes a few hours later, opting to return home before 1 am so he could catch up on sleep and ponder over information.

When Tommy returned, he didn’t expect anyone to still be awake, but the trio were all on the couch, Michael curled up in a bundle of blankets while Tubbo and Ranboo quietly spoke to one another. Both perking up as he slid the glass door open.

“You guys good?”

Tubbo nodded, glancing over to Ranboo who didn’t respond. Tommy removed his combat boots and tucked them out of view under a table, walking over to his roommates.

“What’s popping, Boo boy?” Tommy grinned as he flopped on the couch between the two.

Tubbo practically hissed at him, “you’re going to get the couch *dirty!*”

Tommy lifted a finger to his lips, silencing his roommate’s protests as the avian glanced over to a sleeping Michael.

Tommy’s gaze shifted over to Ranboo who was sitting next to Michael, “you gonna share what made you all zombie mode?”

“*Tommy!*” Tubbo whisper yelled, elbowing Tommy in the arm.

“It’s fine Tubbo,” Ranboo reassured before sighing into his hands and staring off, “I guess it was a little bit of an over-reaction.”

“Hey, none of that, you’re allowed to be stressed, bitch boy,” Tommy grumbled, lightly smacking the back of Ranboo’s head with his wing.

Ranboo shrugged but leaned back into the couch, “The Blade got injured during one of his scouting missions last night.”

“What?” Tubbo blurted in his normal speaking voice, Tommy didn’t even glare at him, he was too dumbfounded by the news.

An intelligent, “huh?” was all he said in reply.

Ranboo nodded along, “that’s what I said too, but he went to hospital last night for a minor injury.”

“Do you know the details?” Tommy asked, coming out of his shocked silence.

Ranboo shook his head, “only that he was shot with something and someone used that as an opening to get the best of him before he recovered, I don’t know if it was a gunshot or something else entirely but whatever it was put him out of commission at least for today.”

Tommy opened then closed his mouth, thinking over the information, looking back at Ranboo when Tubbo asked another question, “aren’t you his secretary?”

Ranboo nodded then shook his head, “not exactly, I’m an intern under the general headquarters but we just happened to get along. Which apparently was uncommon for most interns, so I was assigned to them after, I still do generalised work though just with the addition of managing The Blade’s paperwork.”

Tommy nodded, “so they’re essentially making you do double work?”

“*Tommy, I swear to god,*” Tubbo elbowed him again while Tommy only corrected him to “Philza.”

Ranboo chuckled, “basically yeah, but if he stays out of commission I might go into general for a while.”

Tommy laughed, “nah, takes more than a bullet to get *The Blade* down, I bet he’ll be up and running tomorrow, even being all huffy that you were worried.”

“How do you know this?”

“Please, after fighting that bitch enough you tend to know when they’ll get back up and I can say with certainty that he’s one stubborn opponent.”

Ranboo sighed, “I don’t know if that helps or is more concerning.”

Chapter End Notes

Was supposed to publish this at 9 pm, it is now 1 am. Whoops.

Also, do you guys get notifications when I do small updates to chapters? I’d prefer not to be spamming you guys’ inboxes.

Chapter 13: A Hitch In The Plan

Chapter Summary

Wilbur's not having a fun time, but Phil's here to help.

Ranboo's not having a fun time either, but the crime-stopping trio always sticks together.

TW: Fainting, Somewhat Emotional Exhaustion

Chapter Notes

hello, again children...

I may have done a stupid and thought I uploaded :)
apologises for my mistake

on a more sucky note, I can't promise my current upload schedule (1 chapter per fortnight) as chapter 14 made me want to throw it out a window (it wasn't supposed to exist but this chapter got too long) + figuring out complete lore for this book as it was supposed to be a crackfic originally to prevent insanity as I sat in a car for 72 hours (obviously I have planned plot, it's just getting all the smaller details out)

but if I manage to get everything sorted the above won't matter and it will continue in 2-week increments, so here's hoping for the best

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur's day was going great, he was still processing the fact his brother was in hospital, though Techno himself has assured him he was fine (that man had an annoying tendency to downplay a lot of things). Aside from that, he'd seen Phil in the kitchen at 2 am making god-knows-what and to top it all off he couldn't even visit Tommy this morning because he'd been called into work. *It better be fucking important.*

As he emerged from his change room, intent to stay intangible and unseen to his co-workers. He walked through the hallway, pressing his hand to the sensor to allow him out. Even he couldn't pass through the walls surrounding the change room which gave him peace of mind for its security, no one could enter or leave without first passing through the doorway which only certain, registered people could enter.

As the door slid open he was greeted by a surprised-looking Puffy, "Phantom?" she asked to the air. Wilbur shimmered into a semi-translucent state and blinked back at her, a half-hearted grin present on his face, "you know it."

Puffy smiled and nodded towards a corridor, "we've been requested in meeting room 4, I'll see you

soon.”

Wilbur nodded, slipping back into his fully transparent state and proceeding to walk through the compound’s hallways. He passed a groggy-looking Dream and a quieter-than-usual Sapnap who were also headed towards the meeting room, he opted to not intrude on whatever was going on between them and phased through the nearest wall. He emerged in what he assumed was meeting room 1 and continued his journey walking through walls until he reached meeting room 4.

He paused, scanning the room’s occupants, 13 and Kitsune were already sitting down on the chairs around the main table that directed the attention of the room to the massive screen at the front. Ranboo, Techno’s favourite intern was also here, shuffling through papers awkwardly, Wilbur felt for the kid, he looked like he was on the verge of tears when he accidentally dropped a piece of paper and quickly bent down to pick it up. It seemed Ranboo was struggling just as much as he was with the news about Techno. The pair seemed close in the ways a mentor and a student would be but however much Techno wished that were true (though he’d heavily deny it if asked) Ranboo was a secretary, not a hero intern who occasionally became an official apprentice like some of the others around HQ. Streak was a perfect example, being The Smiler’s, aka, Dream’s apprentice, someone who’d originally joined under their internship program but ended up staying permanently when Dream took him under his metaphorical wing. Not like Phil, who’d taken Techno and him both metaphorically and physically under his wing.

Wilbur winced as his thoughts drifted back to Techno in the hospital bed, nurses actively monitoring him to keep his condition stable and trying to find out what had entered his bloodstream after they had found out he was injected with some sort of substance.

Wilbur huffed, he wouldn’t be able to focus on this meeting if he got lost in his thoughts so he instead appeared to the side of Ranboo, deciding idle conversation would be infinitely better.

Apparently, the other did not think the same as the dual-toned boy let out a surprised warped noise and promptly reappeared on the other side of the room with a *vwoop*. A cloud of purple particles floating around him before blinking out of existence. The two other occupants looked up in surprise at the boy before turning to Wilbur who was barely containing his laughter.

“Sorry, sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you,” Wilbur laughed, his own voice sounding more echoey due to his ability.

The ender-hybrid recollected himself and reapproached him, Wilbur didn’t even bother to question why Ranboo had never teleported around the building for convenience, to be honest, maybe he had and Wilbur just hadn’t seen him do it.

Wilbur’s attempts at conversation were further halted as Captain, or forever Puffy in his eyes entered the room, looking surprisedly over to a slightly visible Wilbur before over to a startled Ranboo. Oh no, the Puffy disappointment was back.

“Phantom-” Puffy began.

“I didn’t mean to, I swear,” Wilbur raised his hands in defence as Ranboo huffed out a laugh, Wilbur side-eyed the intern, such a traitor.

“He wasn’t too much of an ass was he, Ranboo?”

“Captain, I’m so offended,” Wilbur huffed as Ranboo shook his head, walking back to where Wilbur was standing, only now with Captain as well.

Pyro walked in a moment later, sitting down next to 13 and planting his head into the table.

“You look like shit man,” 13 commented, earning a light punch to the arm from said man.

“Where’s Smiler?” Wilbur asked Puffy as 13 shot another light-hearted insult at the fire-wielding hero.

“He’s with Aloe right now, he should be here soon.”

“Ah,” Wilbur nodded, glancing over to 13 who had heard the news.

That explained why Pyro was down, the fire hero had always felt guilty over Smiler’s injury despite having nothing to do with it, the only similarity was the injury’s cause of fire. Most heroes knew of Dream’s injury, but little knew of the exact conditions of his injury, many only knew it was a burn that went from his forearm to his shoulder that was inflicted by the vigilante Blaze. Though what most were unaware of was the fact that it never truly healed, the burn flaring up occasionally due to an accident involving the vigilante. Wilbur had heard from sources that during the fight Blaze was struck with something from an unknown party which caused his usually orange flames to turn sporadic and that of a blue hue. Blaze hadn’t been seen after and the area of the attack had never recovered.

That was almost five years ago and yet Pyro still couldn’t bear to look at his friend’s injury over the guilt that seemingly weighed him down whenever he was reminded of it. From both the fact he wasn’t there and it was something he could’ve prevented due to his immunity to most fires. It didn’t help that the cause of his friend’s injury was fire, something he easily wielded himself.

13 had managed to lighten Pyro’s mood and by ‘lighten the mood’ they apparently meant, remind Pyro about his shortcoming when previously interacting with Rioteer.

“I didn’t lose him!” Pyro complained, “as if you could catch that nimrod anyway.”

“I could totally, you forgot how cracked I am,” 13 grinned, avoiding an elbow sent his way.

Wilbur sighed, Rioteer had been quite the topic in headquarters recently, from how little was in his files, most heroes weren’t even aware of what the vigilante looked like leading to rumours among the younger heroes who’d caught wisps of information. Pyro’s clash with the vigilante hadn’t been forgotten either, especially by 13 who constantly liked to poke fun at the other.

Said hero was currently folding a piece of paper from god- *Philza* knows where, the mature, *adult* deciding it’d be a great idea to throw a paper plane at their hero co-worker. One that pulled the paper plane from his hair and stared directly at 13, right before the piece of paper set itself on fire.

“Dude, that’s a little overkill,” 13 complained, grimacing as the pyromaniac waved it closer to him, leaning back out of range as the suitably dubbed Pyro floundered fistful of burning paper near them. Wilbur heard a muffled squeak of alarm from Kitsune as loose embers floated down from Pyro’s waving hand.

Wilbur idly noted the misty beginnings of one of Kitsune’s signature illusions but remained silent, happily watching the chaos unfold before him while standing next to a falsely exasperated Puffy.

An illusion of a spider appeared on the table and Wilbur shuddered, both the pair were unaware until 13 turned back towards the table as he ducked under Pyro’s arm. The hero shrieked at the sight and fell backwards on their chair, Pyro reflectively throwing a small wave of fire at the illusion, dismissing it and lightly singeing the table.

Puffy laughed at the pair, Wilbur joining in as 13 got back up, shooting a look of utter betrayal to Kitsune.

“Not cool, bro,” 13 grumbled glaring at the illusionist. Pyro laughed at his companion’s comment, 13 shot the man a withering look before it turned teasing, “at least I didn’t burn the table.”

Pyro let out an indignant squawk, diving for 13’s throat as Smiler walked in, “seriously, I swear you guys are literal children.”

Pyro retracted himself to his own chair, hands neatly laid on top of one another on the table, Wilbur watched as he side kicked 13 under the table and snorted at the response.

“I am a responsible adult, Dreamie-poo, I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Pyro replied, doing his best attempt at batting his eyelids at the slightly older hero.

“And you say I’m a handful,” Wilbur added to Puffy, catching the small upward quip of the corner of Ranboo’s mouth from his peripherals.

“Oh, shush you,” Puffy smiled, lightly elbowing him in the side, “you’re supposed to be a role model, being one of the more ‘trendy’ heroes, clearly you’re not doing a good job.”

“I’m doing an amazing job, thank you very much, I’m quite hurt you think otherwise, Captain,” Wilbur announced, sauntering the short distance over to Ranboo, “say, Ranboo, am I *hip* with the youngsters, *wait that’s not the word I was looking for.*”

Ranboo chuckled, “I’m pretty sure you’re what my generation would consider an influencer, highly certain there’s some weird BuzzFeed about ‘best looking hero’ that would have you in it.”

“Stop it, you flatter me so, say we should have more people like you around here, Ranboo,” Wilbur grinned, bringing his semi-opaque hands together joyfully.

Combustion and Philza walked through the meeting room door together, catching Wilbur’s attention though he couldn’t determine their exact conversation, something about technology or something. He had no idea.

Totem followed shortly after, taking a seat next to Kitsune, Combustion joining him after he parted with Philza, his father opting to walk his and Puffy’s way, waving to Ranboo who hung near the wall.

Quiet conversations mixed through the meeting room, Wilbur himself engaging in one with his father and Puffy. It was now, 5:45 am, the meeting was scheduled at 5:50 am meaning it was bound to start soon.

As if on cue Agent SW4Y, a core member from the intelligence sub-branch of the hero association, entered the room, decked out in 3-inch heel combat boots that they still managed to walk stealthily in. How? *Wilbur had no fucking clue.*

“Morning everyone, apologises for the early rising, I know some of you need your quality beauty rest,” they glanced at Pyro, getting a quiet laugh from the room, especially 13.

“Is everyone who should be here accounted for?” SW4Y asked, doing a mental headcount before glancing over at Ranboo.

“He’s here on Techno’s accord,” Philza answered the silent question sent his way, SW4Y nodded, “in that case, I believe everyone is here?”

Philza nodded, reaffirming their point before SW4Y spoke up again his request directed towards the winged hero, “could you close the door please, Philza?”

Wilbur made his way to a seat at the table instead of standing as Philza shut the door, turning the lock with a *click*. Puffy sat on his right and Kitsune watched SW4Y intently from his left, Ranboo followed to the table after Philza gestured the nervous boy forward, the pair taking a seat in the two available chairs left on that side of the semi-circle table.

“Alright, let’s get started, shall we?” SW4Y grinned and turned on the projector, the display showing a case file, not of a person but of a substance.

“Some of you may know about the rumours that started back in early March, roughly five weeks ago. These were regarding a new drug floating around, known for its potent colouration and fast results,” SW4Y gestured towards a picture of a glowing vial, one that Wilbur recognised the description of from Phil.

“Around two weeks ago these rumours were investigated after police reports of increased drug use, The Blade was assigned to look into these but what he uncovered was worse than we originally thought,” the projector screen changed to another image, this time the colour was a vibrant blue.

“The Blade uncovered that the rumoured drugs were actually prototypes from many different areas of a new drug that could prevent usage of abilities, this one, named BPX1 is one of the many prototypes found over the course of the last two and a half weeks alone. This is the most promising one of all 18 discovered and successfully recovered variants.”

“Have you been able to find a reason for the sheer quantity of variations?” Smiler spoke up from his chair.

SW4Y shook their head, “my team and I believe that many different groups are involved, due to the sheer difference of some of the recipes and methods of creation our lab department has identified. We’ve been yet to gain any solid leads but there’s been a lot of talk in the underground about a new criminal ring but neither my team nor myself have been able to identify any place of organisation. So far, we believe that the ones responsible for all the drug inquiries are linked, not in the form of a physical location but in fact, that of networking from like-minded individuals.”

Totem spoke up next, “where has your team been working? Surely if there was that many in such a short time frame it’d have to be a city-wide inquiry?”

SW4Y nodded, “that’s what we initially believed but we’re unsure so far as our tracers haven’t been able to find anything online, so we aren’t sure whether to assume there’s been smaller group meetings in pre-determined areas. My team and I have been spread across districts 4, 15, 7, 9, 16 and 6, with myself particularly in district 15 as I found a relatively credible source in a downtown bar called ‘Delirium’, a place that seems to be full of underground activities.”

Wilbur glanced over to Ranboo who was quietly asking Phil a question, presumably about what SW4Y was talking about before he proceeded to jot down notes, his pen flying across the page but by some miracle the boy’s handwriting was still completely legible.

“This is where you all come in, with the injury of The Blade it shows that whoever is responsible is not messing around, regardless of whether or not it was a lucky shot. They know we’re looking into them and that we’re taking action against them, which makes the threat of this unseen organisation all the more dangerous. This is something we have to stop before whoever it is gets their desired end product.”

“How do you suppose we assist?” Philza calmly spoke up from his seat and Wilbur could see the quiet determination that showed in the smallest of Phil’s tells, such as the way his eyes were set with unwavering concentration.

“There are two things our department requests of you all while we continue our search for further information to really crack down on this case. We wish for you to keep more of an eye out for shady dealings in lesser checked locations of your patrolled districts,” SW4Y paused and surveyed the gathered heroes.

“We also request that there are no solo patrols, we do not want any repeat accidents occurring and someone else watching for the safety of their partner is a huge help in doing so,” they briefly waited for the expected protests but received nothing but understanding nods.

“There will not be assigned duos, just arranged ones prior to your patrols. Unless we receive word of a bust there will not be HQ assigned duos, you can organise those amongst yourselves.”

“What about the other heroes?” Kitsune asked, “can we bring them, or will they not have a buddy system installed?”

SW4Y shook their head, “no, all heroes working in headquarters will be required to have a partner for patrols, we just intended to inform you all prior to a mass email.”

Kitsune nodded, Smiler asked the next question, Wilbur caught him glancing to the empty space behind him, one that was usually filled by his intern.

“What about interns, do they count towards the partner system?”

“It would change on a case-to-case basis, however, if you deem the intern you are bringing along capable you can patrol with solely them, though I would recommend bringing another fully qualified hero with you for extra reassurance should you find a spot of trouble.”

“Understood,” Smiler nodded, while SW4Y surveyed the room, “do we have any more questions?”

There was a group response, some shaking their head, others remaining silent it was broken by Ranboo’s quieter response.

“How would the effectiveness be determined, is there a way to check if someone is just making cheap knock-offs that share appearance?”

SW4Y nodded, “protocol for illicit substances sees them placed here in secured locations which are then transferred to another unit of headquarters which is near my own, our science professionals are the ones that do the tests and determine the results.”

Ranboo nodded, “so say you found a stronger, more complete variate, would you search the area it was brought in from more or do you believe the deals are arranged in districts that aren’t the producers?”

“Yes, we would assign heroes who usually patrol the found area to search around but I cannot accurately answer your next question, some more unorganised groups would most likely stay in their own district, so it would depend whether it was planning or a stroke of luck on their success.”

Ranboo jotted down some more notes, having to flip over to the next page of his notebook, Ranboo glanced up at SW4Y though Wilbur noted he was avoiding direct eye contact, “I don’t have any more questions.”

SW4Y nodded, "in that case, meeting adjourned."

Nudging open the door with his foot he walked over to the kitchen bench and unceremoniously dumped the shopping bags he was carrying on them. Tommy pulled out his phone from his work pants as he slumped himself over the back of the couch, shrugging his bag off onto one of the cushions. He clicked open his messages between himself and Wilbur, the one weirdly cryptic message being the only text between them. Wilbur hadn't even shown up today so Tommy couldn't interrogate him. He had noticed Wilbur had been down yesterday, so he'd be lying if he said he wasn't a little concerned for his friend who usually showed up every morning. It'd been weird when he hadn't shown up as soon as they opened and even weirder when he hadn't shown up at all when the clock struck 8:00 am. What concerned him the most was when he didn't show up at all and Puffy had called him saying she wouldn't be able to come in today, which practically never happened.

He tapped his phone idly against the cushion he'd slumped over on, he was (as much as he'd like to deny) worried about his friend's wellbeing.

Puffy knew Wilbur, she'd said they were friends and suddenly Wilbur doesn't show up one day after looking down and Puffy doesn't either? Clearly, something was up. He wondered if there was a family emergency or something concerning a joint friend which would involve them both leaving to see them. He couldn't be sure, but his birdbrain wouldn't let him think about anything else, even if there was nothing he could do.

But what if there was. He supposed he could do a patrol of Wilbur's area, if he could get it, just to make sure there wasn't anything shady happening around his family's wellbeing. Though the problem was Tommy had no idea where Wilbur lived. He typed out a simple message, keen on not sounding too alarmed, or overly suspicious.

Tommy (Gremlin Child)

Tommy at 5:45 pm:

Whatsup bitchboy, I was wondering what district you live around, looking for some catch-up locations and you organised the last one so I'm merely paying back the favour. Don't think anything weird, I still think you're an ass.

Wilbur switched on his phone, a message appearing on it, he glanced at the message, intending to leave it until later until he read the contact name 'Tommy'. He clicked on the message without any further thought, (not because he was worried about the gremlin that never texted him, of course not) wondering if Tommy needed him as he prepared to head out on Patrol with his father. Maybe they could swing by his area? Until he realised, he had no idea where Tommy even lived and reading through the text, he noted Tommy didn't know where he lived either.

Wilbur (5 am sleep deprived adult child)

Wilbur at 5:47pm:

Aww Tommy you do love me. Anyway, I live in district 2.

Tommy (Gremlin Child)

Tommy at 5:47 pm:

I hate you. Also damn you're fancy, tf you doing at a café in district 11?

Wilbur (5 am sleep deprived adult child)

Wilbur at 5:48pm:

I know good company when I see it.

Tommy (Gremlin Child)

Tommy at 5:48 pm:

Ew, actually nvm, I don't think I will plan anything thank you very much.

Wilbur (5 am sleep deprived adult child)

Wilbur at 5:49 pm:

Aw but Tommy, you're my best friend.

Tommy (Gremlin Child)

Tommy at 5:50pm:

Well, you're sad then, being best friends with a teenager. Kinda weird ngl, anyway, haven't you known Puffy longer?

Wilbur chuckled and rolled his eyes, he flicked up on their messages and caught one he didn't remember sending.

Wilbur (5 am sleep deprived adult child)

Wilbur at 2:51pm:

Short, bright neon orange hair, black jacket with blue highlights, grey shirt and pants, magnet ability. Ask Dream for help.

Shit.

Tommy didn't reply back so maybe he just ignored it? He meant to send that to himself, of course, he'd end up sending it to Tommy of all people, fucks sake. Well, he could probably just play it off as what it was, sent it to the wrong person, if Tommy asked. Otherwise, he wasn't going to risk bringing it up if Tommy forgot about it, man we wished there was an 'undo' button on texts.

Wilbur clicked off his phone and tucked it into his inside coat pocket, this time on his hero outfit, though he didn't usually carry his phone on him during patrols. He sighed into his hands, opting to run them through his hair instead. Tommy was an interesting one, wasn't he? He couldn't get the kid, his veiled kindness wasn't lost to Wilbur though he'd be lying if he said he wasn't concerned

about what Tommy managed to get up to, from bruises to nightly outings. Additionally, the whole not having a legal file was a *complete* other thing too.

At this point he might start going grey, then he wouldn't be able to tease Phil about being old.

"You alright, Wil?" Phil asked (*speak of the devil*) as he walked through the glass balcony doors of the penthouse level that was mostly used before heroes patrolled if they had spare time prior to their shift. It was filled with breakout meeting rooms and the main area was a room filled with couches and seating areas such as a collective pile of cushions people would occasionally fight over if their co-workers were feeling particularly childish. Wilbur usually won those.

Wilbur glanced up from his musing, "yeah, I sent something stupid to the gremlin."

"Who are you calling a gremlin this week?"

"Tommy, the one I keep telling you about."

"Ah that kid, sounds like a good one," Phil paused and seemed to remember something, "hey I met a kid named Tommy the other day, had a run-in with a Karen."

"That sounds like something he would do, would it happen to be the same one, blonde hair, blue eyes, ear feathers?"

Phil looked up at him in a moment of clarity, "oh damn, ok. I guess I must've met him then, he was clinging onto a child called Michael, we couldn't find either of them on record though."

"Ah yeah, I saw Michael yesterday, I think Puffy said Tommy had called him a distant family member, but you can never be sure," Wilbur nodded to himself humming in agreement, "Puffy said the same thing too, said she wouldn't know he existed if he didn't work at her store."

"Don't you think that's a little concerning, Wil?" Phil asked, his wings looking oddly more puffed up than usual.

Wilbur sighed, "yeah and I don't know what happens to him outside of the café, once he showed up and couldn't even stand, he *fainted*, Phil, I couldn't even work out what was wrong, I felt so *useless*, all I could do was tell him to rest and fix the bleeding on his face."

"Aw mate don't be like that, I know you and I know you would've done your best in that situation, maybe I'll pay a visit to Puffy's café to check in on him with you one day," Phil suggested, wrapping a wing reassuringly around his back.

Wilbur allowed himself to gently lean into his soft yet strong wing and rested his head on Phil's shoulder.

"I hope he's okay, there's so many oddities that I can't figure out," Wilbur mumbled, Phil shifted himself so he could rest a hand on Wil's shoulder.

"If he's with Puffy he's in good care too, alright? I'm always here if you need any help with your strays."

"Hey, I do not have a stray problem!"

"Techno."

"Fair enough."

Tommy hauled on his combat boots, tucking his phone into his inside zipper pocket, content with the information Wilbur had provided, despite his usually annoying accompanying jabs. He called out to Tubbo as he flicked his hood up, tucking his ear feathers behind the fabric, “I’m heading to district 2 tonight, Tubs!”

“What?” was the received reply, “I’m swinging by Wilbur’s district for a bit, might check around nearby areas but otherwise I’ll come back to around here.”

He saw Tubbo emerge from the gadgets room as he idly stretched his wings out in preparation for tonight’s patrol.

“Are you crazy? District 2’s filled with heroes.”

“Mhm, I’ll be extra on guard and make use of my signature sneaky moves,” Tommy paused, recollecting himself, “I just wanna check out the area, Wilbur was down the other day, just wanna make sure he’s not stressed over issues in the area.

Tubbo rolled his eyes, but a smile crept onto his face showing his reluctant agreement, “fucking mother hen,” he smirked.

“*Tubbo!*” Tommy practically squawked and lunged for his roommate the other laughing and running away into the more open area of the living room.

However, the pair’s game was interrupted by the late arrival of their other roommate, “Ranboo, help me!” Tubbo called out but paused upon further inspection of their roommate allowing Tommy to catch him off-guard.

Tubbo knocked his shoulder into Tommy’s side, tipping his head towards his roommate in a subtle gesture, Tommy’s gaze travelled to his roommate who looked like they were about to pass out any second.

“Jeez man you look like shit, you good?” Tommy stated, rather bluntly before making his way over to Ranboo who only ran his hand through his dishevelled black and white hair, now that he was looking closer Ranboo really did look like he was going to pass out (if his practically ghost-white complexion aided in his assumptions).

Tommy caught him before he realised what was happening but suddenly he had Ranboo half-collapsed in his arms and a very concerned Tubbo rushing over and fussing over their passed out roommate.

“Oi, give the man some space, I’ll move him to the couch,”

Tubbo backed up shooting Tommy a ‘*we need to talk later*’ look which the latter agreeably returned. Tubbo stepped aside giving Tommy direct access to the couch as he lifted Ranboo’s limp form from where he’d slumped over, manoeuvring the mess of limbs and dumping them on the couch.

“Careful,” Tubbo hissed from closer to him than he was expecting, one of his wings flicking the shorter on the back of the head.

“Rude,” Tubbo grumbled, moving around him to kneel down in front of the couch next to Ranboo.

“What do you think happened?” Tubbo voiced, glancing up at the strangely quiet Tommy.

“I reckon he was in the process of hyperventilating and his body just shut down instead from the lack of oxygen,” Tommy answered grimly, eyes scanning over Ranboo for any other injuries or signs of stress.

Ranboo’s body had relaxed as he passed out, but it was surely unhealthy to get to that stage in the first place. He’d have to find something that could help his roommate. He doubted his nightly activities helped with Ranboo’s secretary work, especially around his case. *Maybe that’s why he was so stressed*, he probably found something out at work and the idiot was more concerned about their safety than his own mental health.

Ranboo groaned as his consciousness returned, his hands twitching as if to help him up which Tommy quickly shut down by firmly placing a hand on the taller’s chest.

“Stay down, boo boy,” Tommy instructed and to Tommy’s surprise, Ranboo did. *Maybe Tommy was the weird one for being difficult when he was recovering*, then he remembered what Tubbo was like and he decided no, Ranboo was the weird one.

A half audible complaint of, “what’s going on?”

“Your dumb ass passed out,” Tommy explained at the same time Tubbo said, “you scared the shit out of us.”

Tommy glanced at Tubbo, “speak for yourself, big man.”

Tubbo rolled his eyes, “you’re like a fucking tsundere.”

“I have no idea what that means but fuck you too,” Tommy replied, plopping himself down next to where the sack of limbs was laying, his wings pressing against the back cushions in a way that by all means should be uncomfortable but surprisingly wasn’t.

“Take a seat, Tubs,” Tommy commented, gesturing to an open space on the other side of Ranboo.

Tubbo sighed but begrudging joined, Ranboo slightly shuffling over as he became more conscious and less *‘I’m going to pass out again’*.

Ranboo lifted a hand to his head and groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose, “that was the worse feeling.”

“I mean you did just blackout man,” Tommy added, pushing himself off the couch he’d just settled into and striding over to their medical box they kept in a draw in the kitchen.

He found their minor pain medication he took whenever he had a headache and snapped one of the capsules free, pouring a glass of water before he returned to the couch. Holding out the items for his roommate as the ender-hybrid blinked up at him in confusion, Tommy raised an eyebrow and watched as the former had a moment of realisation.

“You’re an idiot sometimes,” Tommy rolled his eyes, placing the items on the coffee table and walking closer to the balcony’s glass doors.

He pushed the glass sliding door open, a noise of protest sounding from Tubbo, he caught his gaze, mouthing *‘later’* to the shorter, “I’m heading to district 2, if Michael wakes up let them use the headset if they want.”

He shut the door behind him, glancing towards the pair on the couch, Ranboo was sitting up and blearily taking in his surroundings as Tubbo held the glass of water out for him.

He gave a wordless nod to the pair before turning and launching himself into the clear night sky, intent on heading straight for district 2.

Tubbo sighed, rubbing his temples with his hands as Ranboo sheepishly looks at him, “sorry about that.”

Tubbo only glanced at him, “you’re good boss man, you don’t have to apologise for anything.”

Tubbo dropped his hands to his side and exhaled, seeming to sink into the couch before he sprung forward, “I need to go monitor that idiot,” he supplied as he slunk into the hobbies room.

He heard the quiet patter of footsteps signifying Ranboo’s tailing of him to their gadgets room, he wouldn’t push about whatever the hell happened as long as Ranboo was okay afterwards but if it happened again, he wouldn’t be so considerate. But maybe the other would approach him first as he watched Ranboo pull up a seat next to him while he sat at his main computer table. The one where Tommy’s location was mapped along with a host of other informational sites he may need, such as the police and hero patrol routes, radio comms and the police database.

He caught Ranboo glancing over to the doorway, the other most likely having peeked into their shared room where Michael was sleeping prior to fully following him into the room.

“Michael’s fine Ranboo,” Tubbo reminded as he interlinked his fingers and stretched them out in front of him before his posture shifted to allow him to better type on the keyboard.

A low hum was the response his roommate gave though he could see Ranboo’s tail curling and uncurling, a small tell for when the other was nervous Tubbo had picked up on over the 6½ years he’d known them. He reached over and let his hand rest gently on his roommate’s knee, allowing Ranboo to move if he was uncomfortable from the gesture. Though to his delight, Ranboo only sighed and shuffled his chair closer, his thin tail creeping up and curling delicately around his arm, the fluffy and incredibly soft tip draping over his arm and into his lap.

Tubbo idly pet it, eliciting a startled chitter before it became a more soothing kind of quiet steady purr as Tubbo glanced over the rapidly moving red dot that was Rioteer, or as Tubbo would always know him; Tommy the absolute fucking dumbass of a roommate that was too stubborn for his own good who Tubbo would probably punt to the sun if he could but at the same time Tubbo would tear the entire world apart should something happen to him.

Ranboo slumped forward, resting his head in his hands propped up by his elbows, Tubbo watched as he scanned through the information on the screen before his eyes widened and he turned to Tubbo.

“They’re in duos,” he stated, matter-of-factly.

“Who? The heroes or officers?”

“Heroes, it’s become new protocol, no more solo patrols, so where one is another follows,” Ranboo elaborated whilst looking like he was going through a mental replay of his day.

“I feel like you should’ve mentioned that sooner before Tommy headed straight for hero central,” Tubbo deadpanned, already reaching for his headset, “are there assigned pairs?”

Ranboo at least looked a little sheepish as he answered, “no, they’re on the spot ones for those patrolling in relatively similar areas but it has become mandatory after all the drug activity

recently.”

“Drug activity? Like the ones Tommy found?”

“Sort of, Tommy found a powdered version if what he said was true, the heroes have only found liquid, more complete variants, not sure if they know about the powdered version so I didn’t bring it up.”

Tubbo nodded, hitting a key on his keyboard which opened the line between his own headset and Tommy’s earpiece.

“Alright big man, do I have news for you.”

Chapter End Notes

haha this is a 2 part chapter

Chapter 14: Quick, Act Natural

Chapter Summary

Tommy got a little more than he bargained for but luckily Tubbo's always one step ahead.

Although Wilbur feels like he's always one step behind.

Tommy's wings were extended fully as he soared easily over the urbanised landscape below him, dotted with lights and the movements of many. He flew above the separating street that laid between district 4 and district 11 as he made his way across the sky, he could see the beginnings of district 10 which after he knew district 2 could be found.

He was interrupted from his mapping by Tubbo's voice through his earpiece, "*Alright big man, do I have news for you.*"

"Hit me, T," Tommy knew his voice would be picked up despite the wind around him.

"*Can do, but not right now.*"

"Oh, *fuck off*, what'd you need to tell me?"

"*All heroes are now in mandatory duos for patrols.*"

Tommy actually faulted in his wingbeats, pausing in the sky, "*what?*" he practically hissed as he tried to regain his steady flight.

"*Yup, so I'd maybe recommend not going to district 2.*"

"No-can-do Big T, just give me the low down on kindly *what the fuck*'s going on."

Ranboo's voice was next to emit from his earpiece, obviously the other was the one who gained word of the apparent pair-ups.

"There's been an abundance of drug deals recently and the heroes have reason to suspect they're related so for safety there's been a duo system instated, any solo heroes were issued to pair up with someone prior to leaving. Partners weren't assigned, just based on who's there and available."

Tommy groaned into his hand, "Well isn't that *lovely*, at least they'll be sticking together so I only need to avoid one group rather than two."

"*You'll still go to district 2 regardless of what we say?*" it was phrased as a question, but Tommy knew Ranboo already knew his answer, it was more of a confirmation if anything.

"Who do you take me as, bitch boy?"

"*That's what I thought,*" he could practically hear the sigh in Ranboo's voice.

"*Stubborn asshole,*" Tubbo grumbled, "*I'm sending Pico over.*"

He could faintly pick up the clinking of metal from Tubbo's microphone as Pico presumably was turned on and sent to scout his area.

"If you could wait 5 before engaging that would be appreciated, Pico's not as fast as you and you've already got ground on them."

"I swear you love that bird more than me," Tommy huffed as he halted his movements forward as requested.

"*You don't know, maybe I do.*"

Tommy chirped in protest, "*the fuck was that?*" Tubbo questioned.

"You take that back, prick," Tommy complained, ignoring the heat he knew was creeping to his cheeks from his embarrassment.

"*Was that you, Tommy?*"

"Hey, you shit don't move on, take that back, I'm so much better than that chunk of metal!"

Tubbo seemed to pause, a quiet laugh then, "*okay, okay, sorry. You're sometimes better than Pico.*"

"*Tubbo!*"

Tommy stared at the metal bird perched on his raised forearm that he knew had cameras for eyes, he stared at its unblinking eyes, "*how can Tubbo like you more.*"

Pico didn't stir at his words, not even a blink (because Pico didn't blink- unless they were taking a photo), Tommy shuddered. Lowering the metal bird from his eye line and making a shooing motion. The 'bird' made a noise of complaint but complied in leaving his arm, flapping into the sky and circling above where Tommy stood on a building's roof.

He'd waited in the outskirts of district 10 for the bird but now they'd arrived he could finally set off again.

So far Tubbo hadn't sent through any sightings of heroes in his immediate vicinity, but he had spoken of a few patrol routes and sighted pairings that would be area tonight, mostly ones in district 2.

Tommy grinned as he flexed his wings outwards in preparation to lift himself into the sky, *this was going to be an interesting night.*

Wilbur hopped over a gap between two apartment blocks, steady wingbeats followed along with the quieter flaps of Phil's many crow companions. The pair were combing through the streets of district 3, having only stopped a singular criminal activity (a café robbery) despite being an hour into their shift.

"It's been a while since there's been any bold moves from any villains," Wilbur commented, glancing back at Phil who was landing behind him.

Phil nodded, "there's either a new mastermind or highly controlling group, or there's a complex

collaboration going on, most likely both.”

“It’s so weird to think about organised crime groups, we haven’t really had many since- 17 years now, was it?”

“Yeah, just disappeared without a trace too, left nothing but a name and a legacy, not even any hints on his identity,” Phil’s face was grim as he looked over to Wilbur, “you were only young, terrifies me to think you were on the streets at the same time as that monster.”

“I mean, it’s not like I had any interactions with the guy, didn’t even live close to his territory.”

Phil frowned and Wilbur sighed, “look, I’m safe now and besides, Aries is long gone, their organisation probably fell apart from an inside mutiny or something.”

“I sure hope so.”

Tommy had spent the last two hours flying over the entirety of district 2, he was 99% sure Pico had mapped the entire area at this point too. He hadn’t run into any heroes, he hadn’t run into anyone for that matter, sure he watched cars go by and a few civilians but other than that the district was rather quiet. Unnaturally so, instead, he decided to look into other districts around district 2. Which is how he found himself flying into district 3 and dodging a scrap of metal as it was flung down from the top of the only building’s roof he was lower than.

Upon flying higher than the roof and surveying the cause he noticed two things, one, the person’s description matched that of the one Wilbur sent him and two, *the bitch didn’t even seem to have intentionally tried to hit him!*

They were fiddling with one of the building’s antenna, parts scattered everywhere though the figure didn’t appear to be directly touching them. *Some sort of telekinesis then?*

Another chunk was thrown towards him, twisting out of the way he let the metal pass him before diving down and catching it before it could smash into the road, placing it on the sidewalk instead. Alright, this guy was seriously annoying.

Circling around he perched himself on one of the lower building’s rooves that still had a view of the person on the roof. He pulled out his phone he’d conveniently taken (so he could call Ranboo without Tubbo interrupting) and took a picture of the guy, sending it to one of his contacts and typing out a message before he tucked his phone away. Now he had to actually deal with the problem, damn.

Tommy (Gremlin Child)

Tommy at 11:23 pm:

Yo, this your guy?

[Image Attached]

Wilbur paused his movements as he heard the notification he’d set for exclusively Tommy’s contact ding from his pocket, Phil only raised a brow at his antics.

“You’re a bit distracted,” he commented but Wilbur ignored him after seeing the contents of the message.

He handed his phone over to Phil wordlessly and watched the other's eyes widen.

"That's nearby," Phil added, handing the phone back but pointing to a street sign in the photo that read, 'Maple Rd'.

"Let's go then, can't believe that gremlin managed to find him before professional trackers."

Phil chuckled, "maybe he has luck on his side or something?"

"I wouldn't call that luck; the little shit is probably about to pick a fight with someone and I'll be damned if someone else I care about gets administered to the hospital."

Tommy was not having a good time; luck was clearly not on his side today. He'd managed to get one of his wings snagged with a stray piece of metal as he'd gone to reach for the individual who looked to be wearing a dollar store version of a black domino mask.

The neon version of a redhead lunged for him, making weird gestures to the air which he realised a little late weren't actually weird gestures but them using their ability to throw more shit at Tommy. He ducked the larger piece and on instinct kicked away another which both caused his attacker to dodge and Tommy to recoil from the resistance, *thank Philza for steel-capped boots*.

He pulled a baton from his belt and wished Tubbo had finished correcting a stability error on the discs he'd found while analysing them the last time he used them on the field. But alas, he had not.

As his baton collided with another piece of metal, he noted how convenient having an electric pulse installed would be, he'd maybe take that up with Tubbo later. Though right now he currently had someone who was probably trying to murder him. He doubted villains really took hostages when it was inconvenient to do so. *Wow, he really wasn't focused today.*

Snapping out his leg in the sweeping move Puffy had shown him he knocked their legs from underneath them, making the metal drop to the ground around him. He'd deduced from the lack of other materials being lifted it was probably a magnet ability like Wilbur's message had said.

"Phantom and Philza duo seen heading towards your area, get out of there," Tubbo's order was sharp and left no room for debate.

"Fine," Tommy complained, backing up from the magnet wielding troublemaker who was sprawled out on the floor, surrounded by a collection of metal.

"Ha, scared to fight?" his clearly downed opposition snarked.

Tommy fought off a laugh and merely rolled his eyes, taking into the sky as the breeze picked up around him, "no, I'm just leaving you to the big boys."

Wilbur's eyes raked over his surroundings, there was no sign of Tommy but the guy who'd managed to push George off a roof was dusting himself off from what looked to be the area they were standing in when Tommy sent him the photo. Wilbur turned just as Phil sent off a few of his companions, most likely sending them to scout the area.

"I'll keep a lookout from the air if you want to deal with that guy?" Phil suggested, relaunching himself into the air.

Wilbur nodded and became completely transparent, letting himself melt into the ground, *sorry Dream looks like I'm doing this without you.*

Probably better for the poor fucker anyway.

The night was quieter than Tommy would've expected when travelling through a higher valued area, but who knows the way the rich act around here. It was also unsettlingly quiet for the strict order Tubbo had given, though he wouldn't be the one to push his luck on such a simple thing. They were heroes after all, they'd have some qualifications, they could deal with it. This wasn't the lower districts he watched over; these districts were ones kept safe by those paid to do so in the late hours of the night. The people here trusted them to do so, that's why heroes were expected to upkeep morale and trust in them.

It was fuel for the evil-doers fire, frighten the public, make them lose trust, turn the media against them and you'd soon have nothing to do but watch as they crumbled from something they couldn't fight. That was why it was important it never got to that stage, heroes were highly regulated, not everyone could be one. Extensive training was required with only a few being even picked to partake in them. Some left from the pressure, in another life maybe Tommy would try and get into one of those programs.

But this wasn't another life, this was here and now. Tommy wasn't a hero; Tommy even didn't exist in the eyes of the government's records.

Tommy was also a vigilante.

And he was pretty sure he was being followed by a hero.

He titled his wings, angling him away from flying further into district 3, circling back intending to do a quick last flyby over district 2 before heading back into district 13 where he resided. He'd prefer to stick closer to home after Ranboo's little ordeal as soon as he checked in on Wil's district.

It was only in the brief moments his head turned he heard the soft flap of wingbeats, carried along by the wind. It was too light to be a hero, at least he thought so but who knew with the heroes nowadays. It was most likely a bird, but Tubbo had said Philza was incoming, so a spy was the most likely scenario and if that was the case, he needed to ditch the little shit.

Wilbur watched in satisfaction as the wannabe villain jumped back upon his entrance, stray pieces of metal were half-heartedly thrown towards him only to harmless phase through his intangible form. The guy already looked messed around and from the state of the once standing equipment, he'd already fought someone tonight. Where that someone was now was a whole other question.

His unasked question answered itself in the form of Phil's voice through his headset, "*one of mine has spotted the vigilante Rioteer exiting from this area, I'm going to go survey them, maybe see if I can restrain them though I'm doubtful.*"

Rioteer?

In district 3?

What was the vigilante doing here? Surely this wasn't their usual patrol route, otherwise the heroes would've caught wind of them sooner. But now wasn't the time for questions, the fact was they

were in district 3, Phil was engaging with the vigilante Rioteer while he dealt with the result of someone the Rioteer had already somewhat taken care of.

“Keep your eyes out for traps, get me if you need but I’ll be taking this one to the station, stay safe,” Wilbur instructed, becoming completely transparent and fading into his surroundings as he approached the criminal in front of him.

Paperwork would most likely keep him from joining Phil but surely, he could get back onto the field in time to help if something urgent were to happen.

He’d picked the criminal who’d manage to twist his ankle in the rubble around them, because of course he had, *how on earth had this guy managed to send George to the hospital?*

The guy went limp on the floor at his disappearance, most likely deciding it wasn’t worth the effort to fight a losing battle but content to make it as hard as possible to move him.

Wilbur had to restrain him first, for him to move the guy he’d have to be tangible and that was a risk with whatever magnetized ability the fluro-orange-haired man had. He pulled a pair of ability-suppressing cuffs from his pocket and slid them on without any further resistance, which was good. Now he just had to figure out how to get the guy off the roof, which was, not as good.

Tommy wasn’t stupid, sure he has his moments but he’s not stupid, he knew he was being followed by Philza even before his confirmation had arrived in the form of the hero’s radio communication. Phantom wasn’t tagging along for the ride though, which was better than nothing. Philza had said ‘survey’ but had then added he’d possibly try to apprehend him (though he felt slightly smug about Philza doubting if he’d catch him).

Gliding through the breeze he felt a slight shift in the air currents and took it, twisting in a sharp 90-degree turn, lifting himself higher into the faint cloud cover. He knew it wouldn’t prevent Philza and his spies from tracking him, but he at least hoped to through off a few. If he was being followed, he’d have to travel to a different district instead of his district 13 where he lived. Tonight’s patrol might be a bit longer than usual in that case, though he hoped they’d lose interest after a few districts and reach their travel limit on areas they cared about. Though he doubted it would happen, he’d most likely have to scatter the birds after a while.

Luckily for him, Tubbo had thought of just the thing.

Phil had finally managed to directly locate the vigilante, his spies had alerted him to his changes in movement and some had gotten caught in the wind, returning to report instead as they got their sense of balance back.

Now he soared above the vigilante, a good 100 metres or so away though. He noticed the other happened to be flying a little awkwardly, weight not evenly carried by each wing. Something must’ve happened before they arrived at where the other guy was messing with the antenna. He also noticed that the vigilante was a little on the thin side, not malnourished just that their frame fit someone who was tall but not overly bulky. It matched that of a nimble fighter, not one based on brute strength, though it would make sense for an avian. The red and white jumper the vigilante wore over the top only slightly hid their physic, most of their outfit however was more baggy, more streamlined to suit air travel. Phil’s clothes were the same when tied correctly, his haori gliding through the air instead of catching it.

As the wind shifted it brought him lower to the vigilante, who seemed to have picked up his wingbeats, rotating around and flinging something at him. He couldn't determine its shape before a blinding light erupted in the night air with a bang, another object was thrown as the white patches danced around his vision an accompanying bang went off before things scattered through the air. His companions' caws echoed the night air, *was that fucking birdseed?*

The annoyingly crafty vigilante was now further away from him, they most likely had more tricks up their sleeve. It felt they were prepared, which was a little concerning because the hero department was really not, the vigilante was an enigma and their recent heightened activity was starting to hit mainstream news and create a stir amongst the community.

Wil had mentioned seeing the vigilante at the construction site and Techno had said despite multiple random clashes they'd had the vigilante had helped him get to where the heroes had been ambushed. That had only brought up more questions, the vigilante had to be getting his information from somewhere. That assumption only brought more danger, *how many people did this vigilante have connections with?*

He should go through the HQ's vigilante database and see if he can find any names that could be connected, he doubted he'd find anything if Rioteer was such an elusive figure, but it never hurt to try.

He paused in his pursuit of the vigilante, halting himself in his forward motion as they became further and further away. He gave a nod to a small number of his companions, one's he trusted to return should they get lost or encounter danger, if they got information, it would help but if it became too risky for them, he wouldn't blame them.

"I'm backing off, they kept throwing flashbangs my way, I'll circle back and catch up to you, are you heading to the police station?"

"I'm heading there now; can you do a once over the surrounding area? Check if Tommy's around, I don't want to see the kid on a news story dead in an alleyway if he was knocked out by this guy."

"I'm heading there now; can you do a once over the surrounding area? Check if Tommy's around, I don't want to see the kid on a news story dead in an alleyway if he was knocked out by this guy."

Tommy almost fell out of the sky; *Phantom was looking for Tommy.*

Had Wilbur called in help for him?

Because he'd like to say it was doing the exact opposite-

Phil landed out the front of the police station, one that acted as a minor extension of the hero association, villain turn-ins were common, especially from district 3 where a lot of the clubs were, not to mention Las Nevadas, the most successful casino in the entire city.

That place was just asking for trouble, luckily their security was pretty tight but even then, criminal activity was amidst the crowd. The hero association had been alerted by members of staff and the owner himself about drug deals going on in their premises several times before. One such had been last week where a drug deal had been reported, the contents being one of the weaker but more completed variants of the drug range that BPX1 belonged to, this one, in particular, was named GPX6 for its green pigmentation and ranked accordingly to its level of completion.

A caw alerted him to a police officer making their way towards him from inside the building, he let out a trill to his companions, ‘Stay close, keep watch.’

A chorus of replies met his ears before he entered the station, the automated glass doors sliding closed behind him.

“Good weather tonight, ey Philza?”

He nodded along, “better than it’s been, Agent NT.”

“Please just call me Ant, the rest of the workplace does, you saying that makes my job sound cooler than it is.”

“I’m sure you get up to plenty of interesting things.”

“Paperwork mostly,” the cat-hybrid sighed, their tail flicking restlessly, “I presume you want to know where Phantom is?”

“That would be preferred.”

“Right this way then, the antenna destroyer has been placed in a holding cell, called themselves ‘Spitfire’ when we asked for a name.”

Phil hummed, “you don’t suppose you’ll get much from them?”

Ant sighed, “I highly doubt we will, but they were complacent enough until we reached the cell, started acting differently afterwards, less open to co-operation, can’t blame ‘em really, might just be the whole realisation of getting caught finally kicking in.”

“Suppose so,” Phil paused and recounted the contents of his son’s mistakenly sent message, “maybe keep Dream away from their holding cell?”

“Can do, Phantom did already mention that they were the same person that sent 404 to hospital, management decided to not contact HAH immediately until they had solid evidence to avoid any issues.”

“Do you really think you’ll get a confession?”

“No, but Sasha will be here in the morning, no lies can slip past her, we might have to keep them for a few days while evidence is compiled.”

“You guys really are a well-organised unit.”

“You’re too kind, Philza. Here’s the room Phantom is in though, he’s been staring at the same piece of paper for 5 minutes now, you might need to help him out.”

“That’s Phantom for you, all smug until the paperwork hits him.”

Ant laughed at his comment, “well it was nice to chat with you, but I have to get back to my work, hope you have a good rest of the night, Philza.”

“You too, Ant.”

The hybrid smiled before turning away, walking back down the hallway they’d passed through. Phil gently pressed down on the door handle, slipping into the room and quietly shutting the door behind him.

“Hi mate.”

“Hey, Phil,” Wil’s voice was tired as he slumped over the desk, eye’s unfocused on the paper in front of him and brows knit worriedly together.

Phil walked over to the chair beside him and sat down, resting a reassuring hand on his son’s shoulder.

“Tommy’s fine Wilbur, he wasn’t anywhere in the area, he was most likely just passing through, even if it’s at a concerning hour.”

“But Phil, you don’t understand, *he’s always doing that*, he’s always going out for midnight walks and stuff, there are so many things that could hurt him, *that have hurt him*.”

“Mate-”

“And I can’t even do anything about it! I have no idea what the *fuck* he was doing in district 3 when I’m highly certain he lives near the Little Duckling Café, which is in district 11, across the *fucking city*,” Wilbur cut himself off with sad sort of choking noise as he appeared to curl in on himself.

Phil’s eyes softened as he scooted closer on his chair, “talk to him about it, alright? I’ll come in tomorrow like I promised and we can sort something out. If you’re sure you can’t talk him out of it give him something that can keep him safe, we could set something up that alerts nearby heroes if you want. We could easily ask Combustion about something like that.”

“But what if it’s not enough- what- what if he still gets himself hurt, I don’t want that to happen.”

“Mate, no one does, but trust me on this alright? Give him this for now but make sure you’re not going all overbearing mode on him.”

Wilbur let out a wet laugh as he rubbed at his eyes, glasses nonexistent on his hero attire, “jee, wonder who I got that from.”

A small smile crossed Phil’s face as he joked back, “I don’t know, wonder who.”

Phil had two problems to deal with, one was the vigilante Rioteer. The other was Wilbur’s problem child he’d unknowingly started mother-henning. He wondered if the kid would become another Techno case before remembering Wilbur had mentioned he lived with Puffy’s nephew.

He was still an orphan though, one without any government record if his real name was Tommy Innit, which in hindsight, that type of name doesn’t really seem to be an actual one. Although Sasha hadn’t detected any lies, which either meant it was either his real name or he’d given himself that name.

He’d have to speak with Puffy more about the kid’s situation.

When he next saw her, preferably without the kid around, he’d do just that.

But for now, he had to focus on the anomaly that was Rioteer, the vigilante despite not usually visiting or patrolling in the higher levelled districts was prepared for an interaction between them. No one brings around what appeared to be fucking birdseed bombs for nothing and while they were annoying, easily scattering his flock (he’d have to talk with them about that for future

interactions) it was also a clever idea on the vigilante's behalf. So, they were crafty, aware of their surroundings and an avian to top it off, truly someone that would be a pain to catch.

Looking down at the minimal amount of information on the vigilante he sighed, *why did he agree to this?*

He'd definitely have to look through HQ's files for any potential connections, though he was doubtful he'd find anything of value.

“Damnit,” Phil muttered, getting up from his desk chair and stretching his wings, it was too early for this.

“Stuck on a case again?” Techno’s voice sounded from the doorway, promptly scaring the shit out of him as he hadn’t heard the other arrive at his door.

“You need to stop doing that,” Phil complained as Techno entered his room, face illuminating as he stepped into the artificial light of his room from the dimly lit hallway.

“You need to stop staying up after long shifts,” Techno quipped as he took a seat on Phil’s bed behind him where he was sitting at his desk, hands around something he could vaguely recognise as the scent of coffee.

“You’re awake too mate.”

“Phil, it’s 3:30 am, I have work in an hour.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, oh.”

“Hold on, why are they making you start so early, you just got cleared by the hospital yesterday afternoon.”

“Yeah, I got cleared Phil, no need to worry, they’d already kept me there longer than I was supposed to be, just to ‘monitor any symptoms that could occur’, honestly it was pretty boring and I don’t feel off so I’m getting back into it.”

“Shouldn’t you take it easy for at least a little longer?”

“I’m alright Phil, you’re just overly tired.”

Phil made a noise of complaint in reply.

“Now go to sleep, I heard you promised to go somewhere with Wil so at least don’t be dead on your feet. Have a fresh look at this in the morning, staring at a wall won’t help you with anything.”

“I suppose you’re right.”

Techno snorted, “go to sleep, old man.”

“Hey! I’m not that old.”

“Mhm, sure.”

Phil pushed himself away from the desk on the rolling chair, aiming to at least run into Techno’s feet but alas, the latter stopped the chair and got up.

“Goodnight, Phil.”

Phil sighed as he plopped himself down on the bed, seeing the retreating figure of his eldest son, “have a good day, mate.”

Chapter 15: Hidden In Plain Sight

Chapter Summary

Just another regular Wednesday in the life of Tommy the big man Innit.

Chapter Notes

Happy late new year everyone :)

My gift to you is a late chapter because I was too tired from staying up on New Years
:'D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy had gotten back last night thankfully in one piece, without any followers too mind you. He was very proud of that, evading the number 3 hero with ease, clearly a prodigy in the making. Tubbo hadn't seemed to exactly get his point, while he was happy about the bombs working, he was more annoyed that Tommy had still gone to district 2 and gotten himself in a chase- with two very high-ranking heroes, one who'd happened to be assigned to his case specifically. Tommy had to swear to lay low in the more outer districts, rather than the centre of the city, Tommy had easily agreed. While it was cool to see Philza, he'd really rather not deal with that again, though if Wil was still all antsy, he might have to do some *negotiations*.

Oh, Tubbo had also been annoyed at the gash he'd gotten in his wing... again.

So, it was once again wrapped but he'd tried to leave his wings out as long as he could to help them heal, which led to his current situation.

Michael was happily snoozing on his chest, that wasn't the problem though, no, the problem was while his recovering wing was fully extended and resting his uninjured wing had awkwardly managed to flop on the floor. Who knew you could somewhat cut off blood circulation in wings. Point was, he couldn't feel his wing. He uncomfortably shuffled so it pathetically plopped up on the bed, plumage feeling cooler than usual as he draped it over himself and Michael.

During his musings of the previous night, he glanced over to the red alarm clock that read '4:30 am', he had half an hour before he technically had to get up, but 30 more minutes of beauty sleep wasn't really going to change anything- and he really wanted to stretch out his wings.

He tried his best to not wake Michael as he gently rolled the toddler onto the pop-out mattress as he extracted himself from its comfort. Time to start the day he supposed, noticing Ranboo had done the same.

Upon entering the kitchen, he saw the ender-hybrid stretching out his back before taking Tubbo's favourite cereal down from the highest shelf in the kitchen, placing it on the counter then taking another, more questionable cereal from a cupboard. However, as soon as he saw his flatmate reach for the milk to pour into his bowl he turned around, those 30 extra minutes sounding all the more

tempting.

Michael was once again scribbling happily on the back of a menu Tommy had given them as Puffy restocked their small fridge under the coffee machine that contained their bottles of milk. Tommy was idly tapping a random pattern on the counter next to the register, so of course, someone entered while he was zoned out.

The ring of the little bell above the door alerted himself to an all too familiar presence.

“Wilbur.”

“If it isn’t my favourite gremlin.”

Tommy fought back a smile at the remark before remembering he was supposed to be annoyed at said man.

“Hey, don’t gremlin me, you fucking left me on *read* yesterday.”

“I did?”

“You don’t even remember? *And you claim I’m the favourite,*” Tommy scoffed in faux irritation, he didn’t think he could actually ever be truly annoyed at Wilbur. That fact only slightly concerned him, less than it should.

Wilbur exhaled out a laugh, “I’m sorry for such a betrayal.”

“As you should be,” Tommy nodded before shifting his attention to the register.

“Regular?” Though it was less of a question, more of a confirmation as he turned to the back cupboard and went to take down the milk pitcher.

“Mhm, one flat white too please.”

“You still trying to get past the three-shot limit?”

“The what?” a new voice asked.

Tommy had never turned around so fast in his fucking life because holy shit that was Philza, *the Philza*. In the same store as him. *When did he get here? Did he walk in with Wil? Why is Wilbur so chill about this? Does he not realise who’s standing behind him?*

“Oh, this is my dad,” Wilbur supplied, unaware of his internal combustion.

“a, er- I, fuck,” Tommy tripped over his words, *look, now you’ve made yourself look like an idiot in front of the number one hero, the Philza Minecraft.*

Tommy turned around again, grabbing the milk pitcher as he took a second to collect himself before refacing both familiar faces, though for two very separate reasons. One, an idol and one a friend- *and the two were apparently fucking related.* Which made him realise, Philza was in his civilian attire. He knew the identity of the most famous hero in the city, *surely this is illegal.*

“Hello, Mr Philza.”

If Wilbur had his coffee and had taken a sip Tommy bets a solid \$10 he would’ve spit it out

laughing, Philza, on the other hand, looked like he was having a mid-life crisis, which, when dealing with anything related to Wilbur, was completely fair.

“Please, call me Phil,” Philz- *Phil* answered, *holy shit the Philza just told him his real name- wait a second.*

“Wait… are you telling me your hero name is just, adding a *za* on the end of your name?”

“You can blame Wil for that one.”

“Hey, don’t shift this one on me, you *agreed* to it after all.”

Tommy quietly chuckled but began his regular motions of preparing Wilbur’s coffee, this time with the added extra of Philza- *Phil*’s requested flat white. He’d have to remember that, not that he expected to see Phil any time soon again, but just in case he stopped by. He wasn’t a fanboy at all, just… dedicated to his job.

“So, I heard you got into a fight with a Karen?”

Tommy’s ear feathers perked up, though he soon flattened them back down when a sharp pain shot through his shoulder blades, around where his wings joined. He really should’ve been more careful; wing injuries were always the worse. Hell, last time it’d been so bad he’d fainted and Wilbur had made him go home and rest for the week. Puffy hadn’t let him come into work either so he’d been subjected to Tubbo for the rest of the week. In normal circumstances, he would’ve become a test subject for Tubbo’s shenanigans, but his roommate had been oddly quiet. He didn’t doubt that if he returned home early today a repeat of last fortnight’s groundings and less chaotic attitudes would incur. Tommy would like to avoid that; *house arrest is so fucking boring.*

Besides, he didn’t have any facial injuries, all were hidden either on his wings or under a thin layer of foundation on his skin, it’s how he kept his hand injury hidden. Sometimes it was annoying and smudged if he got too nervous as he tended to get fidgety, but unless he really hit something hard it rarely came off that much. It was waterproof after all, thank Philza for that.

Speaking of Philza.

“Yeah,” he awkwardly laughed, handing over Wilbur’s coffee and moving on to making Phil’s, “bit of a crazy, had some weird sleep-inducing ability.”

“Sleep-inducing?” Wilbur’s tone had more of a concerned note to it, Tommy chose to ignore it, he didn’t need another Tubbo-mother-hen moment.

“Yeah, everyone in store just up and dropped.”

“And you didn’t?”

Tommy stopped for a moment; Michael had seemed minorly affected, but Tommy had covered his direct contact with the gas but Tommy himself had been fully exposed. He pondered over his reply, of course, he knew why, only physical enhancement abilities seemed to affect him. Wilbur didn’t know this. So of course, he went with a logical explanation.

“I’m too pog for that.”

“My mistake then, apologises for such an outrageous inquiry.”

Tommy cracked a smile, pouring the milk into Phil’s coffee, “as you should be.”

“Speaking of Michael, where is he?”

“Do you need to get your eyes tested? He’s just over-” Tommy looked over to the chair he’d set Michael up in with his activities to see no pink gremlin insight.

His pupils contracted as his ear feathers puffed up, giving a once over the store and noting the lack of another bell (hoping Wilbur would’ve noticed a literal child walking past him as he entered) that signified the door’s opening he went to check their backroom.

“Give me a second,” he rushed out before turning and brisk walking into their backroom.

Pushing open their door he spotted a familiar tuff of pink hair trying to reach up to a box of coloured glitter pens Tommy had brought in the other day. He scooped up the small child and sighed in relief, his pupils relaxing and feathers losing some of their poof.

“T. J. J. J.?” (Tommy?)

“Hey, Michael. Sorry you just scared me, please let me know if you’re going to go somewhere,” Tommy explained, placing the toddler back on the floor and grabbing the gel pens down from the counter.

Michael nodded as Tommy took their hand and guided them back out of the backroom at the same time Puffy entered through the side door carrying one of Niki’s delivery crates for the store.

He re-entered the shop’s main area and placed the pens on Michael’s table where Wilbur and Phil had settled at. Wilbur had a nervous edge to him that relaxed upon seeing Michael and Phil appeared to be eying him. Tommy eyed him right back which seemed to make the older avian back down, trying to appear less of a threat as they noticed Tommy’s wariness. Which only further it, Philza may have saved his life, but if anyone touched his child he couldn’t give a shit about who they were. He was a vigilante for fucks sake, it’s not like he listened to the law anyway.

Tommy was definitely as confusing as Wilbur had painted him out to be, the kid had seemed thrown off by his arrival and connection to Wilbur as he’d immediately made the connection from his civilian attire to his superhero persona. Well, it wasn’t exactly a persona, Wilbur just said he was just more focused and less prone to stupid mistakes (such as that one time he forgot to melt the butter before adding the egg so put both in the microwave and accidentally make scrambled egg cookies).

The kid also had an air of self-secured confidence that starkly contrasted his seemingly jumpy nature on his arrival and when Michael wandered off. It wasn’t a sort of confidence that was haughty or self-absorbed, it was more one that promised he wouldn’t go down without a fight. Which Phil supposed was accurate considering the last time he interacted with Tommy it was at a police station.

It concerned him with Wilbur’s input of the kid’s nightly walks and last night’s incident with Tommy catching a wanted criminal in action. Phil had honestly been surprised he wasn’t in the area when they arrived, *maybe he was hiding or maybe he was just used to that kind of activity and moved right on?*

The latter concerned him more, no kid should be out at that hour halfway across the city and casually watching criminal activity. But that’s exactly what Tommy seemed to do, he idly wondered how many things the kid had seen, *maybe he’d seen vigilantes in his area? Or crime*

bosses?

Phil wondered how many times he'd gotten into a fight because of it, clearly, it happened frequently enough for Puffy to ask Wilbur to keep an eye on his condition and for the kid to faint when just standing stationary. Wilbur had said there was no visible injury, *the kid was an avian though*. Wait. Tommy was an avian. *Tommy was an avian*.

Why didn't he remember that sooner?

Of course, that's why the kid was wary of him, being an older avian near someone Tommy very clearly kept watch over. Tommy probably felt challenged by his presence near Michael, but he hadn't asked him to move to another table and he'd suppose it would be weird if he did so now.

Tommy's injury could've also been on his wing when he fainted, taking more energy due to it being hidden away and unable to recover properly.

Tommy's nightly 'walks' would also make more sense; the kid was probably halfway across the city because he could fly. Why? Phil had no idea-

"Hey Wil, pass me your phone?"

"Uh... ok?" Wilbur handed over his phone from one of his coat's pockets and continued drawing with Michael, the picture somewhat depicting a city skyline (he wouldn't tell Wilbur this but at first glance, he couldn't tell who drew which part of the picture).

Phil clicked on the messages between Tommy and his son, watching as the former wandered back over to the register while still keeping a keen eye out for Michael's whereabouts.

Tommy (Gremlin Child)

Tommy yesterday at 5:45 pm:

Whatsup bitchboy, I was wondering what district you live around, looking for some catch-up locations and you organised the last one so I'm merely paying back the favour. Don't think anything weird, I still think you're an ass.

Wilbur (5 am sleep deprived adult child)

Wilbur yesterday at 5:47 pm:

Aww Tommy, you do love me. Anyway, I live in district 2.

He scrolled up to a message that he presumed was sent before Wilbur and himself set out for their patrol, Tommy was wondering where Wilbur lived. Wilbur answered district 2, said teenager then shows up in district 2 later that night. *Was he trying to find Wilbur?*

But why?

He thought back to that morning, Techno was still in the hospital that morning and wasn't released until later that afternoon, Wilbur had been unaware that morning Techno would be released from the hospital as they'd planned to keep him in longer. Had Wilbur said or done something that would make Tommy want to find him outside of his work hours?

Phil checked Wilbur's phone log, no calls between the two, perhaps Wilbur had been out of it that morning?

It would make sense due to Tommy's avian nature of wanting to protect those he cares about, maybe this kid had more of a soft spot for Wil than he let on. Or perhaps Wilbur was oblivious, that too.

He wondered if Tommy in his own little way was trying to adopt Wilbur, because a full-on adult is, of course, the best choice- even if he's technically an adult Wil still manages to act like a complete child sometimes.

At least Techno was- *no even he had his moments...* like fighting Wilbur over a spot on the couch.

He watched as Wilbur triumphantly held up a red crayon and Michael cheered along with him, Tommy was sporting a small smile as he leaned against the pastry's cabinet, now filled thanks to Puffy. He caught Tommy's eye and his smile dropped the slightest amount, he would've missed it had he not been paying attention, Phil subtly nodded to him. Tommy looked conflicted for a moment before he returned the small gesture, turning his attention back to the pair after who were happily fussing over their finished drawing.

Michael scrambled out of his chair, grabbing the paper and scampering over to the counter as Wilbur followed them, lifting them up when they reached the counter so they could present their masterpiece to Tommy.

Phil decided he very much liked this place.

Tommy finished up on an order, sliding it over to the collection area, "iced vanilla latte for... Levi?"

A short, dark-brown haired individual collected the coffee, "thanks."

They exited the shop, giving Tommy a brief moment of peace as everyone in the ordering queue had been attended to. The bell above the door rang again and Tommy mentally prepared himself, sparing a glance at Michael who was still happily drawing, Wilbur and Phil having left around 2 hours prior.

Two familiar faces entered the building, Tommy hoped Schlatt did not have another gun on him but knowing the guy he could never be so sure. Hopefully, they wouldn't have another annoying robbery- *like come on, just use the fucking door guys, you don't look cool.*

"Hola Amigos," Quackity grinned, "regular for me please, Schlatt's requested a flat white though."

"Damn that's a new one," Tommy commented as he entered the pair's order on the register before Quackity scanned his card against the terminal.

"How's work been treating you guys, manage to catch a break?" Tommy asked as he shifted over to the coffee machine to prepare their coffees.

"Not yet, we're hoping it'll quiet down soon but luck hasn't been on our side recently," Quackity huffed while Schlatt rolled his eyes, "someone thinks it's funny to ruin our equipment, there's no way an antenna can get that destroyed by itself."

"Antenna?" Tommy inquired, aware that one of Schlatt's design buildings were in district 2 where the redhead had been destroying communication equipment.

"Yeah, one of my minor workplaces lost Wi-Fi due to property damage," Schlatt grumbled, "couldn't be more inconvenient honestly, we were in the middle of planning a new project."

"Have you had to rely on mobile data?"

“One of the local towers is down, it’s currently being fixed but the connection is dodgy as it is, I reckon someone’s out for us.”

“Why would someone be out for you, that’s such a waste of time,” Quackity added, receiving an annoyed glance from Schlatt.

“People do dumb things all the time, someone probably thinks it’s funny.”

“That building wouldn’t happen to be on Maple Rd?” Tommy added, sliding Schlatt’s coffee over to him.

“Yes? Why? You swung by recently?” Schlatt questioned, taking the coffee from the bench.

“Yeah, your property damage guy’s been caught too, so I wouldn’t worry about any more issues.”

“How do you know?”

Tommy paused his movements of preparing Quackity’s coffee, fishing his phone from his pocket and scrolling through his camera roll, clicking on a photo and handing his phone to Schlatt.

“That’s your guy, got caught last night.”

Quackity whispered something to Schlatt who nodded before passing Tommy’s phone back, “did you take that photo?”

“Yeah, why?”

“What were you doing in district 2 in the middle of the night?”

“Got bored.”

“I can see where Tubbo’s lack of self-preservation comes from,” Schlatt sighed.

“Actually, I would like to state it is clearly the other way around,” Tommy clarified offendedly, putting his phone back in his pant’s pocket and finishing Quackity’s coffee.

“Uh-huh, because Tubbo’s halfway across the city because he got bored,” Quackity commented.

“At least I don’t try and build bombs when I’m bored.”

“I- what?” Quackity seemed to take a second to process his statement.

“That does sound like him,” Schlatt nodded, much to Quackity’s dismay.

“*What the fuck man*, that does not sound safe and that’s a lot coming from me” Quackity protested.

Schlatt only laughed, “speaking of Tubbo, how is he going? I haven’t been able to see him in quite a bit now due to work.”

“He’s well, maybe worried for Ranboo but overall, he’s fine,” Tommy answered.

“Is something wrong with Ranboo?”

“No, Ranboo’s just been having a bit of a rough one with work.”

“Anything I can help with?”

Tommy shook his head, “it’s more just a lot at once, Tubbo’s been keeping him company while he stress bakes though.”

Schlatt nodded, “that’s good, I hope he’s doing better next time I see you.”

“Same here, hopefully soon if work lessens for you and Big Q. Then you guys should be able to properly swing by the apartment and say hello.”

“We’ll definitely try to but at the current moment I’m not sure when things will sort out so no promises yet.”

“I’ll swing by when I’m next down here too,” Quackity added, “couldn’t miss out on quality coffee.”

Tommy grinned, “I’ll see you then, Big Q.”

“Y’know Dream’s been really excited to have you come back to training,” Puffy mentioned as they finished their last task for closing up shop for the day.

“What? Why? I only came once.”

“Yeah, but he was pretty impressed by your hand-to-hand combat and the small tricks you taught him; I think he mentioned bringing a friend this time too to meet you.”

“George?”

“George is still recovering and Dream however much the hypocrite he is doesn’t like it when others train whilst injured.”

Tommy laughed quietly, the pain in his back had slightly subsided but he’d have to be careful not to get hit there or he might just injure himself further, “So, was it actually him that told me to rest or you?”

“No that was still me, but he was concerned when I mentioned it.”

“I would like to restate I’ve met this guy once.”

Puffy shrugged, “he’s pretty open to new people.”

Tommy squinted, “better not try and randomly grab me again or I’ll properly curb stomp him.”

Tommy paused as he finished lifting the final chair onto the table, “tell his friend that too.”

“I’ll mention it.”

Puffy fiddled with the junky keys before slotting it into the door and turning the lock, pushing open her front door and setting her bag on the rack to the side.

“You can leave your stuff here if you want, or bring it with you, whatever suits you.”

Tommy nodded as he left his shoes at the front door, taking his bag with him into the house.

They walked through the hallway towards the training room's entrance, "has that always been there?" Tommy asked as they passed by a black olden day telephone.

"Yeah, Dream's a collector of antique things, that happens to be one of his favourites."

"Huh."

Puffy opened the training room's door, holding it open as Tommy entered after.

"Any ideas on what you want to work on?"

"I don't know, you just said I could come train with you guys, I wasn't really expecting anything in particular."

"Fair enough, we can do some warmups as we wait for Dream to get home."

"Where's he at?"

"Visiting the hospital, I believe."

"Oh, is Gogy alright?"

"Who?"

"George."

"He's in a stable condition, Dream thinks he should be allowed out by the end of the week but with a lot of precautions for activity."

"That's good, everyone seems pretty off since he got sent to hospital."

"Really?"

"Yeah, especially Wil, I'm kinda worried about him."

Puffy gestured to a bench and sat down, Tommy following after her.

"Tommy, I feel like you have to understand Wilbur's got a lot of things going on right now, but he wouldn't want you to worry for him. He quite enjoys your company; he seems visibly happier at the café than when I see him outside of it."

"Do you know if things are alright in his area? He seemed really stressed when he came in the other day."

"When was this?"

"Yesterday."

"*Oh Toms*, that's because his brother was in hospital."

"*What?* Are they ok?"

"Yes, they've been released as of last night."

The sound of the front door opening interrupted their conversation, the pair stood, Tommy, opting to set his stuff down and start stretching the middle of the room while Puffy walked to the training room door and called out a greeting.

Two replies greeted her, both reminding him of his last interaction with Dream, aka, the Smiler. *Holy shit Dream was the Smiler. Dream was the number 2 hero.*

Which most likely meant his friend was a hero too.

He'd have to be extra careful about information regarding his ability, one fuck up could lead him to a ton of trouble.

Puffy glanced back at Tommy who'd started doing stretches on the mat, he looked a little nervous but Puffy concluded it was most likely due to the new person.

"Hey mum," Dream smiled as he walked past her into the training room.

"Sup Captain," Sapnap waved as he went to walk past her.

Puffy held him up, glancing back at Tommy, he hadn't seemed to have heard, "call me Puffy, besides- Tommy isn't an intern."

"Oh," Sapnap paused, "how you get him into training?"

"He seemed pretty eager to learn after that store robbery, also" Puffy levelled her gaze with his, "he's a jumpy kid, don't touch him without his permission."

"Yes ma'am," he raised his hands placatingly.

"Oh, shut up, you're making me feel old," Puffy lightly swatted at his shoulder but stood to the side to let him into the training room.

"What's up Tommy, nice to see you again," Dream grinned, setting his bag down to the side with its usual *thunk*.

"You ready to get your ass kicked again by a 16-year-old?"

"You're on."

"*This* is who kicked your ass?" Sapnap questioned, getting a glare from said teenager.

Dream laughed, "as if you could do any better."

"*Boys*," Puffy warned.

Tommy snorted and Puffy sighed, "alright, rules are, no hospitalisations, no breaks and no abilities," Puffy made sure to make eye contact with both Dream and Sapnap upon saying that.

"Damn," Sapnap jokingly complained.

Dream rolled his eyes and swept Sapnap's feet from under him as he changed stretching positions. Tommy muffled a laugh as Dream's friend landed squarely on his ass.

"You're on green man," Sapnap grumbled.

"If at the end of this a single thing is charred, I will personally design your next training session,

young man," Puffy warned.

"I'm not that much of a fire hazard, relax."

Puffy raised an eyebrow, "tell that to the HQ's cleaners."

Tommy nervously laughed, "I would prefer to not be crispified today thanks."

Sapnap only grinned, *highly reassuring* to a normal person. Tommy wasn't actually worried about being burnt; he knew from previous experience that his fire abilities couldn't hurt him. What worried him was *his previous experience*- with the hero Pyro who worked with the Smiler, who he highly suspected was Dream's friend who was currently *in the same room as him*.

"What's your name anyway?"

"Sapnap, nice to meet you kid."

"I am a big man thank you very much, this is a no children zone," Tommy stated matter-of-factly.

"You might want to tell your friend over there that," Tommy loudly whispered to Sapnap behind his hand.

Sapnap laughed as Dream gasped in mock offence, "oi I live here you little shit."

"No excuses big man, you have been exiled."

"The tribe has spoken," Sapnap added getting a high-five from the teen.

"While it's nice to see you all getting along, could you at least do your warmups at the same time, it's strange to see Tommy being the role model here," Puffy added.

"Hey! What's that supposed to mean?" Tommy exclaimed.

"I don't need warmups, I'm already *all fired up*," Sapnap grinned.

"You better not be," Puffy warned.

"Sapnap, shut the fuck up," Dream added.

"That's five minutes, you should all be pretty warmed up and suitably competitive if the number of challenges there's been in the last minute alone is anything to go by," Puffy announced, throwing several hand-held pads to the trio stretching on the floor by the main mat.

"Hell yeah, get ready to be decked Dreamie-poo," Sapnap grinned taking small jabs at Dream's shoulder.

Tommy stood beside Puffy as the pair centred themselves across from one another on the mat, Puffy took a step forward and lowered her arm between the pair.

"No abilities," she reminded before glancing at each of them as they nodded, "three, two, one, begin!"

Puffy jumped back as Dream sprung forward, Sapnap swerving to the side on the ball of his foot, lifting his knee and attempting to land a hit on Dream's stomach before the other stepped out of

range. Dream faked an upwards hit and instead connected his other elbow with Sapnap's chest.

"Oh, fuck you," Sapnap grumbled, lunging forward and turning at the last step to the side, aiming to sweep Dream's leg. Dream's next movements became a blur as he somehow manoeuvred himself around Sapnap to behind him, grabbed a hold of the other's shoulders and pulled downwards whilst taking his knees out from underneath him.

Sapnap landed on the floor with a grunt, "I hate how you always do that."

"You never seem to have a way to combat it though, so whatever works," Dream laughed as he pulled his friend up off the floor.

"Point is Dream's," Puffy announced.

"We're doing points?" Dream questioned as Sapnap complained, "hey no fair, that was a warm-up round, I was totally going easy on him."

"Uh-huh sparky," Dream rolled his eyes.

"Oh, you wanna go green man?" Sapnap challenged, Dream just gestured to the mat.

"That was a practice round, nimrod."

"You're just a sore loser."

"Are you guys gonna go again or what?" Tommy added from the sidelines.

"He's got a point, get to it," Puffy agreed.

"Alright, *princess* here wants that to be a practice round so let's reset the points so he can't pull some crap later about me 'cheating,'" Dream informed, moving back into position on the mat with Sapnap opposite to him.

"Come at me bro," Sapnap grinned wildly.

Dream mentally cringed, "you need better phrases."

"3, 2, 1, go!" Puffy exclaimed, interrupting their argument before it could begin.

Sapnap lunged first this time and Tommy eagerly watched, trying to find similarities within their actions.

"Dream wins again, that makes it 3-2," Puffy announced.

"You're so annoying," Sapnap huffed as he stepped off the mat, "you need to seriously just stay still."

"No can do."

"Now can I spar someone?" Tommy intersected.

"Honestly go for it kid, I wanna see what you can do, kick his ass!" Sapnap grinned, going to pat Tommy on the back before the teen oddly stepped away, covering it by complaining about how Sapnap was sweaty.

“I’m not that sweaty,” Sapnap protested.

Being met with a “you kinda stink,” from Dream.

Tommy didn’t catch the ‘*watch it*’ Puffy mouthed to the fire ability user as he stepped onto the form mats across from Dream.

“You ready to lose big man?”

“I seem to remember a different outcome last session.”

“Hey, I still beat you a few times, prick.”

“3, 2, 1, go!” Sapnap interrupted as an excuse to break eye contact with Puffy.

Tommy sprung forward just as Dream did, both managing to angle themselves away from the other as if not expecting their opposition to have been so quick to react. Dream’s motion placed his support on one leg as he aimed for Tommy’s chest with a well-improvised roundhouse kick. Tommy managed to avoid the hit by dropping to the floor and sweeping Dream’s leg from under him in the way Puffy had taught him 2 weeks prior.

Dream landed awkwardly on his stomach, the sideways momentum of his kick twisting his body before he hit the mat.

“Tommy’s point,” was announced by Puffy followed by a whoop from Sapnap.

“Yeah, you kicked his ass! Serve’s him right,” Sapnap grinned purposefully ignoring Dream when he complained that ‘*I’ve just been sparing you for the last 5 rounds*’ because who needs that kind of negativity in his life?

Tommy laughed, rubbing at the back of his neck before he extended a hand to Dream who’d rolled himself over on the mat and was staring at the ceiling as if it held all the world’s answers.

Dream accepted the hand up and huffed, “I’ll take that one I guess, nice reflexes though.”

Tommy grinned, “honestly I wasn’t expecting a kick from you, I guess you don’t really look like a kicker, but I’ll keep that in mind.”

“I feel like that implies you thought I was a one-trick pony?”

Tommy shuddered, remembering the harsh green glow of those same eyes, “no, I did not, I always got taught to never underestimate someone.”

“That’s a good thing to know, who taught you that?”

“Certainly not my parents.”

“Why?”

“*Dream you idiot-*” Puffy whisper yelled, stepping across the room.

“Don’t have ‘em, never knew ‘em anyway,” Tommy explained, laughing at the horror on Puffy’s face at the question, “it’s fine Puffy, I don’t need them anyway.”

“Tommy everyone deserves a family,” Puffy sighed, gently placing her hand on his shoulder.

“And I have mine, you and Tubbo and Michael- and Ranboo I guess,” Tommy paused, “but don’t you fucking dare go telling him- or anyone I said that.”

Dream awkwardly laughed, “sorry for bringing it up.”

“You better be,” Puffy added.

“It’s fine, I don’t remember them anyway,” Tommy shrugged, “let’s get back to me kicking your ass, enough of that ‘depressing’ shit.”

“Let me still remind you of last session,” Dream protested.

“Let me remind you of last round,” Tommy snarked back, stepping back onto the mat.

“3-2, to Tommy,” Puffy grinned as Dream was knocked off the mat.

“Take that fucker!” Tommy excitedly cheered.

Dream groaned, “I still say that was unfair.”

“La la la la la, I can’t hear you!” Tommy yelled his hands covering his ears in a childish manner.

“I feel like I just got showed off by a kid,” Sapnap commented.

“That’s a big man to you,” Tommy retorted as he pulled a water bottle from his bag.

“Remember, no abilities,” Puffy looked at Sapnap, “I’m talking to you Sap.”

“Yes boss,” Sapnap sighed, raising his hands across from Tommy who did the same.

“3, 2, 1-” Puffy counted.

“Go!” Dream yelled from where he was half sitting, half lying on the floor.

Sapnap was the first to move, Tommy immediately noticed the difference in fighting styles, Sapnap was more an offensive fighter whereas Dream was a mixture of offensive and defensive. Tommy backed up, arms redirecting hits away from his body before he found they stopped.

“Point to Sapnap, 1-0,” Puffy announced, letting Tommy glance down at his feet which were off the mat.

“That was easier than I expected for someone who just kicked Dream’s ass,” Sapnap commented smugly.

“All right you fucker, that was just a practice round,” Tommy made a shooing motion to Sapnap who returned to his starting position.

“Come at me Tommy,” Sapnap taunted.

“Fuck yeah I will.”

Sapnap landed harshly against the mat as Tommy exhaled a relieved breath, he'd honestly not expected that to work but since Sapnap was such an aggressive fighter it'd worked out perfectly. When Sapnap had lunged at him Tommy had ducked under the other's centre of gravity and flipped the man over him judo style.

"What the fuck was that?" Sapnap complained as he laid on the floor.

Tommy straightened up and rolled out his shoulder's it hadn't hurt his back as much as he thought it would've so that was a positive.

"Do you get what I mean now, Sappy Nappy?" Dream called out from one of the benches where he looked to be filming Sapnap, especially delighted by the fact he was on the floor.

Puffy gave a thumbs up to Tommy, "nice job, that's 4-2 to Tommy."

"He really gave you a run for your money," Puffy laughed as she walked over to Sapnap and helped haul him into a standing position.

"Looks like you lost this one Sapnap," Dream grinned as he clapped Sapnap over the back, tucking his phone in his pocket which Tommy felt contained a lot of footage Dream would rub into his friend face whenever he could.

"*I do* get what you mean," Sapnap groaned, "he's like a fucking ninja."

"Hey, I'm right here," Tommy complained making Sapnap jump from his metre away proximity.

"I'm not that scary jeez," Tommy grumbled as Dream cackled to himself.

"I'm just off my game, alright?" Sapnap defended.

"You're like a mini *him*," Sapnap gestured to Dream who was clutching his shoulder half bent over and laughing like some discount tea kettle, "I do not need another one of him in my life."

Tommy side-eyed Dream, "I would like to think I'm a bit more- pog."

"That's a weird choice of adjective."

Tommy shrugged, "Guess I'm just too cool for you."

The three boys were currently all sitting around the gym, Tommy was lying on his back, water bottle arm lengths away from him. Dream was scrolling through something on his phone while Sapnap was sitting on one of the benches lifting hand-held weight saying something about, "the burn never stops."

Puffy was elsewhere in the house, making what she called 'protein milkshakes'.

"Did you hear they're opening up trainee recruitments spots again in May for hero apprenticeships?" Dream looked up from his phone and over to Sapnap.

"That's pretty soon, a month, right? It's the 4th, is it not?" Sapnap looked over at him.

"Yeah, it's the 4th."

"Wasn't the last set back in January? I thought they only do them twice a year, aren't they

supposed to be in July?"

"It doesn't say the July ones have been moved I think it's just an additional set this year."

"Must be with all the stuff that's been going on recently."

"Must be."

"You finally gonna take on an apprentice?" Dream asked as he set his phone down.

"I don't know, no one's really matched my energy yet."

"Maybe someone completely different to you would do you some good, level out your fieldwork, stuff like that."

"Maybe I guess."

"Hey, you should try out Tommy, you've got a pretty good chance to make it in with your combat skills and ability to think on your feet," Dream commented, adding Tommy to the conversation he'd been listening to.

"Really?" Tommy's brain did a mental 404 bluescreen, no one had ever really said that to him and truthfully, he'd never really considered becoming a professional hero, mostly due to his unrecorded legal situation. Vigilantism had always been his way to get things done, besides he doubted he'd become a hero if it meant neglecting the lower districts. More and more heroes were patrolling lesser districts, but change was slow and the odd patrol in a district that wasn't upper class was rare with the exception of Phantom's patrol route and some of Philza's, more had to be done for the city's 47 districts to be properly looked after. So, for now, his way of illegally fighting crime was his way of helping those districts even if he could only do a few, his patrolling of the nearest 10 districts to his home was a lot. There was only so much a 16- nearing 17-year-old could do after all.

"I agree with Dream, *and that's not something I usually do*, but you seem like you've got the drive for it- if it is something you're interested in of course." Sapnap agreed, placing the weights on the floor by his feet.

"I don't know, I guess it's something I never really considered to be a possibility."

"Anything's possible kid, we live in a world full of superpowers," Sapnap countered.

"I suppose you're right."

"Damn right I am."

Tommy rolled his eyes but smiled, "I'll think about it..."

"You do you Tommy, but if you ever wanna go down that path give either of us- or Puffy, a shout and we could help you get started," Dream added.

"Just think about it kid," Sapnap grinned, "You'd fit right in and I'd love to have someone else to help beat this guy in the yearly tournaments."

Tommy laughed, "I don't know about that one, but I'll consider."

If you've made it this far into the book comment some assumptions you have towards where this is heading, I want to know what you think everyone's roles in this are- and who you think the main antagonist is :)

Chapter 16: You're A Hero To Me

Chapter Summary

There are more heroes in Tommy's life than he could ever expect and while he's been ahead of them, some are catching on.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When Tommy had walked through the front door of their house (one of the rare occasions he did so when entering the house) holding what looked to be a milkshake with a positively conflicted expression Tubbo knew he'd have to deal with a potential mental breakdown from yet another roommate if he didn't do something soon. So instead of addressing it immediately he instead started with:

“Welcome back boss man.”

“Tubbo have you ever thought I could be a hero?”

“Wow, not even a hello.”

“Sorry.”

“It's all good Tommy, and what- have I ever thought you could be a hero?”

“Yeah?”

“Tommy you *are* a hero.”

“I'm not though.”

“Tommy, most nights, regardless of how *you* feel, *your* health, or anything else of the sorts, *you* go out and *you* help people who can't help themselves. *You* stop criminals from getting their way, *you* keep places safe that would've otherwise been neglected, if that's not the makings of a hero I don't know what is.”

“That's not what I meant Tubbo,” Tommy paused after Tubbo raised an eyebrow, “I mean working as a hero under the HA.”

Tubbo paused, “so... working as a hero apprentice with the hero association?”

“Yeah.”

“I mean I feel like it'd go against your sense of wanting to help the lower districts, but I could see you working with them if the conditions were right, Ranboo and I both somewhat work with them after all.”

“I suppose.”

“That's not what you were looking for was it?”

“No... it’s not that, it’s just Dream had a friend over with him today when I was at Puffy’s, he was Dream’s hero partner Pyro, *they weren’t very subtle about their jobs*. Dream asked if he was finally taking on an apprentice with the upcoming hero trainee recruitment.”

“And what you want to be his apprentice?”

“No, that’s- *no*, it’s just they mentioned how they normally have two recruitment sessions available each year, one in January and one in July but this time they’re having an extra one in May.”

“So, you want to apply...?”

“Should I?”

“Only if you want to.”

“I don’t know though.”

“Well, you don’t have to make a decision now Tommy, you’ve got basically a month before the recruitment program would even start.”

“I guess you’re right.”

“Glad we’ve come to an agreement, now let me try that weird shake you have.”

“It’s got protein powder or something in it but by all means go ahead,” Tommy shrugged passing Tubbo the plastic bottle full of probably chocolate protein powder and milk.

Tubbo took a sip, then another, his eyes lighting up, “you need to get Puffy to tell me what brand she uses.

Tommy looked at him weirdly, “I don’t know how you like that stuff, it’s kinda weird after a while.”

Tubbo shook his head whilst taking another sip.

“Also don’t you literally have her number, she’s your aunt, not mine.”

“I feel like you’ve technically been adopted.”

“No thanks, I would like to keep my sad, lonely, orphan status.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know, I’ve never really considered what it’d be like to have parents.”

“Don’t ask me, my mum died before I really knew her and dad’s almost always been busy, hence this living arrangement.”

“Do you dislike him for it?”

“If I’m being honest, sometimes... it’s a little hard not to, like he’s basically left me alone for the past 5 years, if I didn’t have you guys it’d be a lot quieter around here. But I guess there’s also a positive to that, we get to do this whole vigilante gig unhindered, and he pays for basically everything else. He owns this apartment complex so- free rent, and he does the electricity, Wi-Fi and water bills too. Plus the grocery card, he’s pretty stacked I guess so our money goes to either

our own personal savings or the equipment in this house.”

“But does he feel like a dad to you?”

“I don’t know what a dad is supposed to be like, but I feel the relationship we have is as close as I’ll ever get to knowing, what about you Tommy? Do you remember your family?”

“No, I guess that’s why the concept of parents is weird to me, like someone who loves you regardless of who you are, I don’t see how that works. They don’t gain anything from you.”

“Love’s not about gaining things Tommy, I love you and Ranboo as if you were my siblings, because you guys basically are. I don’t ‘gain’ things from you, aside from the occasional migraine.”

“Mhm, love you too Tubbo, especially when you pick that metal bird over me.”

“Pico’s my emotional support when you go and do something stupid, it’s a totally valid choice.”

“Ranboo would disagree with you there.”

“What would I disagree with?” Ranboo interrupted as he walked in from the hallway.

“Pico’s Tubbo’s emotional support when I do something dumb,” Tommy supplied.

Ranboo eyed Tubbo, “only sometimes, most of the time if Tommy’s done something dumb Pico’s out on the field too.”

“Ok, I can at least agree to that,” Tubbo shrugged, downing the last of the powdery milk.

“Do you remember your family Ranboo?” Tommy asked the ender-hybrid suddenly.

“Woah there, I was not expecting that question today, you can’t just spring that on me.”

Tubbo choked on Tommy’s his drink as he fought back a laugh at Tommy’s bluntness.

“Well, do you?” Tommy restated.

“I mean, not really, you guys are the only family I remember, I don’t remember anything before the hospital actually. I’d just been told I’d suffered injuries most likely from a fall, I knew my name and that was it. A doctor had handed me a page with the information that was on my profile, there were names listed as my caregivers, but they’d said the numbers they’d tried calling hadn’t picked up. There was no address listed either, when no one had come to visit me within a week, they gave up looking and I’d found myself in a foster care centre after I was released from the hospital. Ran away from there and found you guys soon after, you know the rest.”

Tommy shuddered, “fucking hate those places,” he muttered before adding “Well, that’s shit.”

Ranboo laughed, “I suppose it could be viewed that way, but I have you guys now so I couldn’t have asked for much more.”

“Aw, boo,” Tubbo cooed, going over to hug him as Tommy pretended to gag.

“Well, guess none of us have functional experience with parents,” Tommy helpfully summarised.

“Guess you’re fucked, you practically adopted a child,” Tubbo added, not breaking his hug with Ranboo.

“Hey, if I’m fucked, you’re fucked, we’re fucked together, this is a whole party agreement,”
Tommy protested.

“That’s pretty true considering you’re out so much,” Ranboo agreed.

“Hey-”

“For example, I just put Michael to bed, so hush,” Ranboo put a finger to his lips, his other arm still hugging Tubbo.

“Yes, yes, I’ll be quiet,” Tommy whisper yelled.

“Tommy? Saying he’ll be quiet, how outlandish of a claim,” Tubbo drawled.

“That’s pretty off character for you,” Ranboo joined in.

“Actually, knowing him he’ll last a max of 5 minutes,” Tubbo corrected, breaking out of his overdramatic tone of speech.

“Yeah true,” Ranboo only nodded.

“I am right here,” Tommy complained.

“We know,” Tubbo grinned, waving him over to their hug which Tommy begrudgingly joined.

Tubbo knew he was only faking though; Tommy was actually the biggest sucker for hugs.

“I hate you guys,” Tommy grumbled, though it was half-hearted at best.

“We love you too,” Tubbo answered along with Ranboo voicing the same.

Tommy stepped into their shared apartment, he was sore and tired. Another night spent fighting crime for the good of the people who lived there, albeit more on the side of caution than usual as he was still recovering and Tubbo had given him the order to stay away from major hero areas. He changed out of his vigilante get up and into regular PJs (the Philza themed ones Tubbo had got him last year for his birthday). In the time between when Ranboo’s work had ended and when Tommy’s work had ended Ranboo had managed to set up a race car bed next to Tommy’s pop-out couch. The room now consisted of a bunk bed, a pop-out couch bed, Tubbo’s bedside table where Pico was charging, a cupboard and a race car bed, leaving very little space to move around aside from the paths to each bed.

But as he plopped down on his bed he cast one last glance to his roommates, Tubbo had once again claimed the top bunk and was unconscious hugging a pillow. Michael was comfortably lounging in their bed and Ranboo was-

Tommy stepped closer quietly, crouching down to be level with the ender-hybrid who had a small number of purple particles floating above him, something that usually meant his body was preparing to teleport.

“Hey, Ranboo,” his tone was gentler than his usual boisterous energy, trying not to startle the sleeping teleporter- or wake his above roommate who would take pleasure in whacking him with something or other.

Ranboo stiffened but his eyes blinked open, staring at Tommy before flinching away, luckily still

remaining on his bed.

“Sorry to startle you, big man but you were trying to do a runner in your sleep again.”

“Again?” Ranboo’s voice was laced with sleep but still managed to sound alarmed.

“It’s not your fault, you really need to take some time for yourself though, even stress baking hasn’t seemed to cut it for you recently.”

“Maybe if someone stopped trying to get themselves caught each night-”

“Hey, tonight went well, remember the ‘no high-level threat engagement’ order Tubbo gave? And I got back 30 minutes ago, I’m not going to bed without showering if I can manage.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Now stop trying to get a midnight snack and properly sleep.”

Ranboo sighed, “I was trying to do that anyway- but thanks for the heads up.”

Tommy scoffed, “I don’t mind you that much.”

The ender-hybrid smiled softly and if Tommy’s eyes hadn’t been so used to dark alleyways, he would’ve missed it, “goodnight to you too Tommy.”

“Night, Ranboo.”

Tommy turned to his bed, finally allowing himself to collapse into its hold, grabbing Snuffles the seagull from where they’d been left the previous night.

He looked at the people around him and decided, he wouldn’t want it any other way.

“Tommy, can you grab the cereal for me?” Tubbo asked as he flopped down on one of the kitchen’s stools.

“What’s got you so demotivated?” Tommy slid the cereal back to him.

“Apparently the day I missed online school on the 22nd was actually important so they’re making me start at 2 pm instead of 4 pm today so that I don’t get free time today.”

“Why’d you miss it on the 22nd? And wasn’t that ages ago?”

“It was two weeks ago Tommy, it’s Thursday today, think back to what happened that day.”

“Uhhhh, I’m not getting anything,” Tommy shrugged as he spoon-fed Michael another mouthful of cereal.

“You got sent home early, remember?”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, ‘oh’.”

“But wait, what are you doing at midday today?”

“Some ‘all-important member of parliament’ wants me to get blackmail on their opposition.”

"I thought you usually do more morally correct stuff, like finding missing people for the police."

“I’m feeling petty today and he was willing to overpay- and boy do I love fucking with corrupt government officials.”

“Is Ranboo the only one in this household with a moral compass?”

“Yeah probably, if Michael turns out anything like us.”

“I’m not that bad.”

“You left someone to bleed out in an alleyway.”

“Hey! The Blade didn’t do anything about it either- and there’s a chance they got help.”

“Look I’m not disagreeing with you but for someone who usually has a ‘no kill’ rule it struck me as odd.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever, you’re just having a moral crisis, clearly. You normally wake up at 10 on Thursdays and it’s currently 5:15- fuck,” Tommy turned and grabbed his bag.

“You home all day, today, Tubbo?” he added as he took a container from the fridge that *definitely* didn’t say Ranboo’s.

“Yeah, want me to watch Michael?”

“That’d be preferred, they walked off yesterday and scared the shit out of me,” Tommy nodded before turning to Michael, “will you be okay to spend the day with Tubbo at home?”

Michael nodded along with a couple of happy claps, “＝リ トキ：ル・タ・＝ジ！” (Uncle Tub!)

Tommy grinned, "yeah, Uncle Tub will look after you today, alright?"

“Ooo, a secret, just for me?” Tommy gasped, quite overdramatically, pausing in his rushing around as he zipped his bag up and leaned closer.

Tommy laughed as he lifted Michael up from the bench, “aw Michael, I love you too,” Tommy grinned before it turned mischievous and he gave Michael a raspberry getting a squeal of laughter from the toddler.

Tubbo laughed at the interaction before checking the clock, “Big man it’s 5:17.”

“Oh yeah, uh, gotta run, you’ll take good care of them?” he asked as he handed the gremlin that was Michael over to the gremlin that was Tubbo.

“I’m not that dumb,” Tubbo rolled his eyes.

Tommy laughed but grabbed his bag and opened the front door, “debatable,” he called back before closing it and running off down the apartment stairs.

Tommy had ended up being on right on time as he'd ran straight from his apartment to work and aside from the occasional jogger not many people were up at 5 am. He'd arrived as Puffy had flipped the sign to 'open', giving her a wave of acknowledgement before heading to the backroom to put his apron on.

He hooked his bag over the coat stand and pulled his apron from the front book, putting it on and tying the back up as he exited the staffroom.

Hopefully, today would be a little better with pain management, his sparring session had only slightly upset his still recovering wing, he hadn't managed to injure himself too much last night which helped but he still was cautious towards doing any overly strenuous activities whilst at work.

Puffy had taken the remote first today but had surprisingly set it to the channel Tommy himself would've put, maybe he'd finally won the best channel.

"Morning Tommy," Puffy smiled as she joined him behind the counter.

"Eyup Puffy, we expecting a quiet one this morning?"

"It is Thursday, so maybe."

A few minutes of comfortable silence passed until the tv caught Tommy's attention.

"Breaking news" it read, *oh boy not again.*

The news lady appeared, "This just in, a police station located in district 2 has been violently broken into," the screen cut to an amateur video obviously taken by a member of the public, it showed a van driving through the glass front door before moments later blue flames erupted from the building. Tommy noticed that they didn't seem to spread though, only appearing in a sporadic type of pattern.

"It is believed currently that the villain who only identified himself as 'Spitfire' was released during this attack," the video then cuts to a nearby security camera that shows more flames from a side exit and the vague silhouette of two people leaving the area.

"Emergency services were called quickly to extinguish the flames but at least half of the offices seem to be destroyed."

"That's not pog," Tommy stated bluntly.

"Yeah, you're right on that one," Puffy answered, not commenting on his choice of adjective, she was used to it by now let's be real.

The news continued to show footage of the fire department arriving and extinguishing what they could of the flames.

"I need to make a call, can you man the shop for me and keep an eye out for if Niki arrives?"

"Sure," Tommy shrugged, not like he was doing anything else.

Niki arrived 15 minutes later with still no sign of Wilbur, Puffy was also still on the phone but Tommy doubted it was still the same person. He collected the crates from last time and greeted

Niki as she got out of her van decorated with little icons of baked goods.

“Eyup Niki, how have you been?”

“Hello Tommy,” Niki grinned back as she walked around to the back of her van and opened the back doors, “I’ve been good, how have you been?”

“I’m pretty good if I do say so myself,” Tommy gave a thumbs up while Niki brought a crate closer for ease of lifting.

Tommy took the crate he was given, it being surprisingly heavier than he thought it’d be, avoiding cringing as his back disagreed. He was a big man, he’s lifted heavier, *it’s fine*.

As he turned he missed Niki’s slight frown, unaware of her slowed pace as if observing him.

He placed the crate on the inside counter of the backroom, turning and heading back outside past Niki to grab another. He looked around, unsure of which one was for their order. As he was about to ask when Niki’s voice caught him off guard.

“You’re injured,” she stated matter-of-factly behind him as she gently placed her hand in between his shoulder blades.

Tommy flinched backwards and this time didn’t miss Niki’s concern but opted to play it off as he collected himself, “how do you move so silently man,” he half-laughed.

Niki frowned, “sorry for startling you Tommy, but I can sense you’re in pain.”

“I’m fine, I’m a big man Niki,” Tommy tried, “now which crate is next?”

Niki wasn’t just going to drop the subject, “Tommy, I’m a healer, I can help if you let me.”

“I appreciate the offer but I’m fine Niki,” Tommy dismissed, “wouldn’t want you wasting your energy on me anyway.”

“I wouldn’t be wasting anything Tommy, besides, my ability is aided by baked goods, it’s why I run a bakery.”

Tommy didn’t reply.

“You injured your wings, didn’t you?”

“How do you know that?”

“It’s not surface level; it’s hidden which is making it harder for it to heal.”

Tommy sighed, “I doubt it’ll work but if you insist, then alright.”

“Do you doubt my capability?”

“No- it’s not that,” Tommy quickly added.

Niki quietly laughed, “just teasing, Tommy.”

As Niki placed her hand on Tommy’s back, he fought the urge to shift away from the contact, he watched as Niki closed her eyes in concentration before blinking open in surprise a few moments later.

“That’s… odd.”

“Told you,” Tommy shrugged, picking a crate that looked to be labelled ‘LDC’ which he could only assume stood for ‘Little Duckling Café’.

He started walking towards the café’s back entrance before Niki stopped him again, “I know about your nightly activities.”

“My walks?” he hoped.

“Your fights,” she corrected.

Fuck, think Tommy.

“What, do you think I’m some wrongun?” Tommy spun around offendedly.

“I don’t think you are.”

“Then what do you think I am?”

“I think you’re trying your best, you just happened to choose a more illegal means.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Your vigilantism.”

What the fuck. How does she know? Is this the end, have I finally fucked up enough to get caught? No, just act like you don’t know. Hopefully, she’s just joking.

“My vigilantism…?” Tommy laughed nervously, “Niki are you alright up there in the head?”

Niki frowned, “I know the signs Tommy, you tick every one of them.”

“Me? A vigilante? I can’t hold even hold my own in a fight, why do you think I get injured so much?”

“Puffy would disagree with the ‘holding yourself in a fight’ information, but this isn’t about Puffy, this is about you. I won’t tell anyone.”

“Niki, I have no idea what you’re talking about-”

“I used to heal one,” Niki interrupted.

“What?”

“One of my close friends, they were a vigilante, I used to heal them when they were injured.”

“How do I know if I can believe you?”

“I don’t have any way of showing you, they’re not around anymore so I can’t introduce you to them, they disappeared around 5 years ago.”

“Oh.”

“Got into a fight with some heroes, I don’t blame him though, he was only trying to protect his younger sibling when things went south. It was probably all a massive misunderstanding, but I haven’t seen him since. He just… *disappeared*, I don’t think he died… well, I hope not.”

“You haven’t seen him at all, not even outside of his vigilante persona?”

“Nope, the place he used to live was sold straight after with no warning.”

“Damn, that’s awful.”

Niki nodded, “I can only hope one day he comes back, but I don’t know, he might stay in hiding, he always was the more paranoid type, always convinced Aries was still out there plotting. Coming to hurt the city one day.”

“Was he around when Aries was active?”

“No, but I think he saw something one day, it changed him, he became obsessed with keeping the people he cared about safe, I think it was the reason he became a vigilante.”

Niki looked at him, “I can keep a secret Tommy, I’ll keep yours.”

Tommy sighed, “I don’t see what you knowing can do other than getting me potentially arrested.”

“I would never, but what I really mean to say is, you have one more person to go to if you ever need anything,” she pulled out a business card with a bread icon on it, “this has my number if you ever need me.”

Niki Nihachu

xxxx xxx xxx

Bring the bakery to you!

“Alright,” Tommy relented, taking the card.

“And your roommates?”

“What about them?” he was more defensive about that question than he would’ve liked to be.

“Do they know?”

Tommy gave a slight nod, “You promise, lips sealed?”

Niki held out her hand for a shake, “I promise.”

Tommy took her hand and shook, “I’ll hold you to it.”

“Hey Ranboo, nice to see you this morning, could you help me with this?” Philza asked as he appeared to be sorting through files in a multitude of drawers, some files creating a small pile on the table.

“Sure, what do you want me to do? Are you looking for something?” Ranboo answered, striding over to the cabinets filled with files.

“I’m looking for anyone that could potentially be connected to Rioteer, like an ally or anything, just checking through vigilante files that HQ has, doubtful that we’ll find anything but never hurt to try.”

“Yeah...” Ranboo had to avoid hesitating at the news instead intending to use it as an opportunity

to find information on other vigilantes the HQ took note of, “which drawer do you want me to start with?”

“You can go alphabetical, I’m doing reverse alphabetical, we’ll meet in the middle after a while.”

“Is there anything, in particular, I’m looking for?”

“Look for anyone that is labelled as ingenuine or crafty, or anyone that overlaps in time on the field with Rioteer while being a relative risk, think medium above.”

“How long has Rioteer been active for?”

“2 years to my knowledge, that’s what is written in the report.”

“I didn’t find anything in ‘A’,” Ranboo announced as he slide the drawer closed.

Phil nodded, “could you go through the ‘B’ category, I didn’t find anything in ‘V’, if you find something add it to the pile,” he gestured to the table.

Ranboo started shifting through the files, there wasn’t many, but he assumed there were fewer in the later letters because Philza seemed to be going a lot faster than him. There weren’t many vigilantes in their database, which was strangely in paper form, not digital, he’d have to ask about that, it’d probably be more secure online, less prone to damage too. He opened the first few files, all having the same result, all caught prior to Rioteer’s supposed first patrol. He knew that there wouldn’t be any actual ‘allies’ that directly helped Rioteer all the time, but there could be a few of the vigilante’s Tommy occasionally worked with. Like Halo so he’d have to try and keep a lookout for those. Still, it’d be good if he could find a vigilante that fit Philza’s criteria so he could at least throw the heroes off a tiny amount. Sorry, Philza.

He opened the next file and was surprised to find a name he remembered Tommy talking about one day, he’d told him that one of the vigilantes he worked with had just suddenly stopped showing up after they got attacked by heroes one day. Tommy had said there was no way they got caught, otherwise, the news would’ve had a field day. Blaze had just never returned to the field.

Ranboo flicked through the vigilante’s file.

Name: Blaze

Sex: Male

Hair Colour: Brown

Eye Colour: n/a

Appearance: Dual toned blue/red eye visor, black shirt, navy pants, made of seemingly breathable and flexible material

Weapons: Reliant on ability

Ability: Fire

Threat Rating: Moderately High

Additional: Disappeared after the events of the D40 attack. Permanent injury to the Smiler, no injuries to Streak or civilians.

The Smiler was permanent injured?

Just who did Tommy hang out with while patrolling?

Though Ranboo supposed, Tommy would do a fair bit of damage too.

“I found one with a moderately high rating, but it says they disappeared.”

“Add it to the pile, they could be in hiding, any potential variable is still a variable we need to consider.”

Ranboo placed it in the pile and continued sorting through files, mentally storing anything he considered important to jot down later and relay to the others.

It was a few hours later that the pair finished, Phil had brought Ranboo up to the planning floor and let him rest at one of the couches where he appeared to be journaling. Phil had carried the files up, with some help from Ranboo but there weren’t many files though he guessed that was because the HQ wasn’t completely up to date on local vigilantes, much to Phil’s dismay.

He organised the files into categories on one of the tables and looked over them, there were 12 files in total, he’d have to do a detailed search on each of them and still, they could all come up with nothing. He sighed, *why did he agree to this again?*

A *ding* from his phone disrupted his train of thought, he took out his phone, clicking the home screen on and seeing it was a text from Wilbur.

Wil (adult child)

Wil at 12:08pm:

Yo, Techno and I are on break right now, you wanna join us for lunch?

A break sounded great about now, that way he could better think on a full stomach and take a look with fresh eyes later.

Dadza (flappy bird)

Dadza at 12:09pm:

Yeah sure, where at?

Wil (adult child)

Wil at 12:09pm:

...

Little Duckling Café

Dadza (flappy bird)

Dadza at 12:10pm:

I swear you go there enough you could singlehandedly keep them in business.

Wil (adult child)

Wil at 12:10pm:

Yeah probably

Phil tucked his phone back into his pocket, he wasn’t in hero attire so he could suitably walk around in public, Wil and Techno had just gotten back from a patrol from the sound of it so they might be a minute to get changed into casual clothes. He decided it’d probably be better to wait in the lobby for them, knowing Wil he’d probably call a fancy hire car or something, just because he could. Probably also for shits and giggles when he pulls up to the café.

He looked over at Ranboo who technically could go on break now if they wanted to, “Hey

Ranboo.”

The ender-hybrid looked up, “what’s up?”

“Do you want to come with Wil, Tech and I for lunch?”

“Uhh, isn’t that more a friend thing and you only really know me from work and I uh...,” Ranboo started mumbling to himself as Phil approached.

“I’d consider you a work friend and you can say no if you like, I’m not forcing you to come with us, just if you’d like to of course.”

“Uhh, ok then.”

“Great, we’ll head downstairs then to wait for them.”

“Wait, lunch as in now?”

“Yeah.”

“But I don’t have my break until another hour.”

“It’s fine, you can take your break whenever, so long as it’s not super busy around here, though it rarely is.”

Phil headed over to the elevator, with Ranboo in tow and went to click on the ground floor before instead clicking level 22, he needed to request something from Sam real quick, “sorry I just remembered I needed to check in with someone real quick, you’re welcome to head to ground floor if you like and wait for me there.”

Ranboo nodded and clicked ‘G’.

They arrived at level 22 fairly quickly without only half a minute of elevator music to accompany their short trip, “I’ll see you in five,” Phil added as the door slid close.

He turned and walked down the hallways to the main room, pushing the door and stepping into a wide-open space filled with desks and special equipment testing areas. He spotted Sam fairly easily, seemed that the other had too as he put down his project and walked over to him.

“Hello Phil, I don’t see you around here much, what can I help you with?”

“Hey Sam, I was wondering if you were able to make something for alerting nearby heroes, something like a distress signal.”

“Yeah, sure I can do one of those, why, who’s it for?”

“Have you heard about Wilbur’s newest problematic adoption case?”

“No, but it doesn’t sound surprising.”

“Yeah, Tommy was the one that reported Spitfire to Wilbur, a shame he got busted out, but I feel like that shows more is going on for that particular criminal, annoying Sasha didn’t manage to get his identity.”

“Oh, that was Tommy? Damn, brave kid. I can see why you want one and about that identity, they did manage to get a DNA test sent to the lab, so they’ll be able to find out who they are, that’s

probably why they trashed the place so much when they left.”

“That's good to hear and I suppose that makes sense, I just hope that whoever they are they'll be easier to catch next time now that they're on our radar.”

Sam nodded, “there's been too much going on recently, HQ seemed to think a batch of new recruits will help but I'm worried about what that means for the trainees' safety.”

Phil nodded, “I think Puffy feels the same but there are a few who are excited, but I'll probably be keeping more of an eye out for any that manage to get into the program.”

“Hey Ranboo,” Wilbur greeted, appearing beside the intern, not by means of using his ability, just quiet walking.

Said intern tail was now fluffed up and he had teleported a metre away, “I swear everyone likes sneaking up on people here.”

“Yeah Wil, stop picking on Ranboo.”

“I assume you are Wil?” Ranboo asked.

“Call me Wilbur, nice to meet you,” Wilbur held out his hand.

Wilbur.

Why does that name sound familiar?

Ranboo shook Wilbur's hand but didn't hold eye contact, “so where are we even heading?”

“My favourite place!” Wilbur grinned.

“Which is?” Techno chimed in.

“Little duckling café,” Wilbur answered.

Oh shit. That's where Tommy works.

“Isn't that where that Tommy kid works?”

Oh no.

“Yup.”

Tommy's going to kill him.

Chapter End Notes

And so the plot thickens :)

Additional note as of 4/3/22: I've been adjusting to a new schedule recently (hence the chapter delay) so there's a slight time gap where there won't be an update as chapter 17

is still being worked on. Hopefully, I'll get a hang of everything soon and the monthly updates will resume as normal.

Chapter 17: Blades Sheathed

Chapter Summary

Tommy finds that sometimes when he can't sleep, his actions come back to haunt him.

Chapter Notes

I didn't realise that I had a collections tab so to the people that added this book to their collections I'm sorry it took so long for me to approve it but thank you guys so much for your support <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They'd arrived by means of an expensive-looking chaperon trip that Wilbur had insisted on paying for, whatever this guy did at the HQ seemed to pay well. Which actually brought up the fact that Ranboo had no idea what he did, he knew Techno and Phil worked as professionally paid heroes so maybe he was someone in that sector? Honestly, he had no clue, but he'd rather not question it, especially after that car ride where everyone but him seemed completely fine with the concept of a luxury vehicle. Ranboo had just felt like if he even creased the fabric lining of the seats he'd be murdered on the spot.

But now that they'd arrived at their destination, he remembered creasing the car probably wasn't the worst of his current concerns, dealing with this shit show probably would be.

Tommy and him just had to play a really hard game of, 'don't say anything remotely suspicious'.

Wilbur was first in-store even though he paid the driver, he had an air of childish excitement about him as he pushed the door open and meandered over to the counter where he locked eyes with a certain gremlin who almost paused what he was doing. Before he glanced back at Wilbur's company, keeping his cool with Phil and Techno but faltering as his gaze landed on Ranboo.

Ranboo slightly gestured to the others with a nod of his head at Tommy's silent question of 'Why are you here?'. Tommy narrowed his eyes before sighing and moving to the register.

"You're in later than usual Wil, thought you weren't coming today," Tommy started and Ranboo almost froze.

Oh, this was Wilbur.

Great.

How utterly convenient.

"Sorry Toms got called in to work early today," Wilbur genuinely seemed disheartened about not being able to come in earlier.

"That's chill man, just means you don't get the first coffee of the day, my finest work if you will,

also I still have no idea what you do,” Tommy shrugged but tapped away at the register, “usual?”

Wilbur gasped in mock offence, “Damn, I was after your finest quality too, guess I’ll have to go.”

“That would be in violation of your loyalty membership card. Besides, what can I say? First in, first serve,” Tommy laughed before looking at Wilbur’s company, which included Ranboo himself.

“What do you three want, you still after a flat white Phil?”

Phil seemed surprised to have what appeared to be his order recited to him, “uh.., yes, please.”

Tommy shot Phil a finger gun before looking over to Techno, someone who Ranboo supposed Tommy had never met.

“Espresso Macchiato please,” Techno supplied, his voice the usual monotone.

“And Ran-,” Tommy stopped mid greeting at his realisation that they were obviously trying to not associate with each other, Ranboo only wondered how he’d fix that mistake, “random person who I keep seeing around but have never spoken to.”

Real creative, Tommy.

“Uhh, can I get a chai latte?” Ranboo avoided looking away, Tommy nodded ever-so-slightly, he’d covered Tommy’s slip up.

“Of course, you’d be one of *those* people,” Tommy’s tone was half-joking, borderline mocking to the outsider but to Ranboo it was teasing with no real heat behind it, perhaps even nervous. He watched his roommate flex the muscles in the hand that wasn’t tapping the register, yeah, definitely a little nervous. You pick up a lot of someone’s tells after living with them for 6 years.

When Wilbur turned to him Ranboo almost lost the act, “don’t worry about him, he’s just messing with you.”

Tommy caught Wilbur’s comment and almost burst into laughter himself, he deadpanned Wilbur instead, “I hope you know, if you ordered a chai latte, I would disown you.”

“You can’t disown me,” Wilbur retorted, “I will not be defeated by the likes of a child.”

“I am a big man, and this big man will unfriend you IRL.”

Techno had experienced his fair share of weird in his life, he’d been coerced into adoption by Wilbur after all, who at the time, was a literal child. But still, watching Wilbur and the so-called gremlin child interact was a whole new level of, ‘*what the fuck am I witnessing?*’. Now said child, *Tommy* (even though both were acting like children- Wilbur was somehow an adult) was currently bringing up whatever weird shit Wilbur had done whilst visiting the café, including that one time he bought a dog biscuit for the ‘furry friends’ of the store.

“At least I don’t try and eat dog biscuits.”

“You so would, besides I didn’t eat it.”

“What you just let it disappear into your equivalent of Mary Poppin’s bag, how much other shit are you carrying?”

“The last part’s irrelevant but no I didn’t ‘let it disappear into the void’ I gave it to someone.”

“Oh my god, please tell me you didn’t give it to-,” Phil started.

“I gave it to Fundy,” Wilbur elaborated without hesitation.

Phil’s disappointed sigh was barely audible over their continued chatter.

“Who?” Tommy added, “do you have a pet?”

“No, they’re my cousin.”

“What the fuck, Wil.”

“What, I’d say it’s pretty funny.”

“It is but not the point, the point is, why was that your first thought upon seeing them?”

Wilbur shrugged, “what can I say? I’m a strategist.”

“The only strategy you’re enacting now is either getting your contact deleted from my phone or I might just rename it to something as dumb as you.”

Techno supposed the kid was pretty good at matching his younger brother’s energy, Phil seemed to notice this fact too, which was probably why he hadn’t stopped their bickering yet, otherwise, they’d have to deal with Wilbur’s energy. Besides, Puffy was at the register and seemed to have everything handled and Tommy had technically done his job. He’d made their drinks and Techno had marvelled at the craftsmanship from the 16-year-old, especially when he used coffee art as an excuse to draw an angry face in Wilbur’s latte. He duly noted that Ranboo seemed less uncomfortable with Tommy’s presence than he normally was for new people. Maybe they’d make good friends, he might bring his unofficial intern back here some time. When Techno tunned back into the conversation at hand he caught glances of both party’s contacts for the other.

From Wilbur’s phone displayed:

Little Shit

Pain in the ass (Tommy)

Message, Call, Video, Mail

2021 666 707

And a spared glance towards Tommy’s phone that showed Wilbur’s:

Disowned Adult Child

Little Duckling’s No.1 Weirdo (Wil)

Message, Call, Video, Mail

8008 420 069

Yeah, maybe it’d be best if one of them stepped in.

When Tommy came home that day, he chucked his bag on the kitchen counter and walked over to Ranboo who was writing in his journal on the couch.

“You wanna enlighten me on the fuck that was today?” Tommy grumbled, leaning on the back of the couch next to where Ranboo was sitting.

Ranboo turned to him, closing the leather book, “Phil invited me, I only realised where we were going after I’d agreed.”

“And you didn’t back out?”

“Kinda already committed at that point,” Ranboo supplied, Tommy understood though, his roommate was not a fan of being a so-called ‘hassle’ which meant once he agreed to something he was seeing it through.

Tommy rolled his eyes and slumped on the back of the couch fully, “that was annoying.”

“It was.”

“Nice playoff earlier though,” Tommy added, remembering when he almost fucked up the silent plan straight off the bat.

Ranboo laughed, “Anytime.”

“Also, Chai lattes aren’t that bad,” Ranboo added.

Tommy scrunched his face up and looked at him, “you’re fucking weird man.”

Ranboo raised an eyebrow, “mhm, *I’m* the weird one.”

“What’s *that* supposed to mean??”

“It means you’re both idiots,” Tubbo interrupted from the hallway’s entrance.

“Hey that was uncalled for,” Tommy grumbled.

Tubbo rolled his eyes but gestured Tommy to follow, “I’ve got something to show you.”

Tommy perked up and followed the brunette into the gadgets room where his roommate unlocked a black box, inside was the knife he’d given to Tubbo over 3 weeks ago. It was paired with several glowing cartridges around the knife that looked like it could be loaded into it.

Tubbo pointed to a thin trail in the side of the knife, “Once you insert these bad boys it’ll drain into the outside compartment, perfect for small nicks to help deal with nuisances. Should be able to down 3 averagely built people before you need to reload, each colour works slightly different but I’m still in testing, so I’ll let you know when its done. Just wanted to see if you wanted anything different with this particular model.”

Tommy gazed at the knife, “it’s perfect, looks pog.”

Tubbo laughed, “good to hear- also before I forget, I fixed the issue with the discs and programmed a better safety protocol.”

Tommy excitedly gasped, “Lemme see.”

Tubbo only playfully scoffed before bringing out another box, though significantly larger to accommodate the size of the discs. He attached one to the magnetic band worn around his wrist that allowed them to stay secure when running, he tapped it and it turned on to a vibrant green he then tapped it again, clicked a button on the computer’s keyboard and the sides flared out to

sharper blade-like edges accompanied by a red hue.

“I’ll need to press a button on my end to deactivate safety mode,” Tubbo explained.

“Ooo, nice, isn’t the red a bit stereotypical though?”

“Tommy, why are the discs purple and green?”

“Because they’re the colours of you guys,” he answered easily.

“And what’s your colour?”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, it’s red you moron.”

“Hey, I just didn’t want to give off the wrong vibe, just checking. Gotta have the people’s trust y’know.”

“With the amount of community service activities you do, I don’t think you need to worry about the *colour* of your weapons,” Tubbo tapped the disc, its side receding and becoming green again, “besides, this is a last resort feature, not everyday usage as I’m sure you’re aware.”

Tubbo raised an eyebrow at Tommy as if waiting for a silent answer instead he got a physical one, “yeah Tubs, there’s a reason I asked for its installation anyway.”

“Alright, alright, now go have a break before you rush out and go be heroic or whatever.”

Tommy grinned, ruffling Tubbo’s hair, “whatever you say big T.”

Tommy was once again out in the field, discs rightfully attached at his wrists and not a cloud in the starry night sky, which of course meant cooler temperatures, especially with the wind that was rushing through the higher altitudes. Sometimes he wondered why he went for a white and red jumper; his pant choice of black was clearly a more strategic option. The lengths he went to for his signature fashion statement.

As the breeze picked up, he shifted his wings, testing to see if he could fly properly tonight, so far, he’d just been gliding on the winds. His wings had been allowed out to recover for a few hours while he was at home prior to getting into his vigilante get up so *surely* they would be just the slightest bit better by now?

Well, no better time like the present to test them, he leapt into the empty space between the two building’s rooves, letting his wings glide but also flap against the downward motion of gravity, which Tommy after a few more wingbeats managed to win against. He let himself fly with the wind as it sailed across the city, rising higher to catch faster currents. Tubbo had told him to stay relatively close, which basically meant no excursions to the other side of the city. He was alright with that; he’d like to never have more chases with very high ranking professionally trained heroes. Y’know, the ones trying to hunt him down.

From what he could gather with his internal mappings of the city, he’d reckon he was somewhere near the edges of district 4, though he was fairly certain he hadn’t officially crossed into that district yet. The supermarkets were far to mundane.

He was reminded why he didn't stray from the lower districts again as he caught movement from below, a figure cloaked in red who Tommy hadn't seen since a good chaotic two weeks ago. Personally, he would like to go a few more, so he opted to change directions. The Blade was a well established and efficient hero, advancing into district 4 where the hero himself was currently patrolling would be like doubting the Blade's ability to do his own job, he could handle it. Besides, the lower districts needed Tommy more. The Blade and their sparse games of cat and mouse could wait a little longer, he'd prefer no more injuries for at least the rest of the week. Considering it was currently Friday, he wasn't sure if he'd stay true to that goal, but he could try.

He steered away from district 4, deeper into district 12 and approaching district 14, he flew uninterrupted for several blocks. The shadows below were his only company until his headset suddenly came to life- he wouldn't admit that it had slightly startled him- Tubbo's voice reaching his ears.

"If you wanna head towards district 21 there's been a call for emergency services from an apartment building, closest services are in district 14, you have time to swing by and help evacuate people before anyone else arrives."

Tommy angled himself towards district 21, "do you know the emergency?"

"All three services were requested, I'm assuming fire."

"On it."

The wind helped aid in his journey towards district 21 with him able to just ride the winds as they rushed past surrounding scenery. It was only as he gained further height that he was able to see a trail of smoke wafting into the night air. Now having found the issue he titled his wings downward slightly and dove forwards, now properly able to the bright oranges illuminating the building from one of the rooms on the 3rd floor. Luckily, or unluckily, it depended on how you looked at it, the apartment was only 4 floors with what looked like to be eight rooms on each.

He counted the windows until the room that was ablaze before flying over the building to the other side where the doors were, hoping for some sort of extinguisher to be hooked somewhere on the walls. He immediately flew towards the staircase, assuming it was the most probable location. He landed on the 2nd floor, running up the stairs and spotting one that he promptly pulled off the wall and continued upwards along with hitting the emergency button which would set the evacuation protocol off which for some reason wasn't already in action.

He didn't need to count the doors as he sprinted down the half-open hallway, smoke was slowly finding its way out from underneath the door of room 48. He wasted little time in adjusting his bandana before kicking the door down. It was a simple apartment room, the doorway opening into the kitchen which was linked with the living room that further connected to three other rooms, two he assumed were bedrooms and one was the cause of the fire which he could only assume was the laundry. A woman was lying on the floor from the entrance of one of the bedrooms into the living room, she was crying on the floor, her leg caught under the weight of a fallen cupboard while smoke filled the room. Her hazy gaze snapped to his and she mouthed only a few words, '*Save them please*' before she looked over to a closed-door opposite to her bedroom. He firmly nodded but before he would be saving anyone he stood in the laundry's entrance and extinguished what he could of the open flames that had spread to the walls.

After putting a decent amount out he dropped the extinguisher and rushed to the woman who was at the most risk, being closest to the fire and inhaling the most smoke. He hefted the cupboard off her, but it was clear that moving the cupboard off her wouldn't enable her to walk. He reached down again and found her arms, pulling them around his neck as he picked the rest of her body up,

trying his best to not disturb the most likely fractured or broken bones in her leg. The woman winced but couldn't protest, Tommy ran out of the apartment, placing her down against the wall and upon noticing her trying to close her eyes told her: "Don't close your eyes yet. I need you to stay awake for me, okay? I'll get everyone else out."

He looked around, other occupants were exiting their rooms, some thinking it was an accident as they calmly walked out before seeing the entrance to room 48. He yelled to one concerned passer-by, "Hey, you in the pink shirt! Stay with her for me?"

They looked around for others before nodding and jogging towards them, Tommy didn't watch as they crouched down next to her, too focused on running back into the apartment room and opening the previously closed door.

One bed and a crib sat in the room that was heavily decorated with colourful patterns, the occupant of the bed, who couldn't have been older than 6, sat up and flinched away from him in fear.

"Hey kiddo, it's alright, your mummy's outside, okay? I need to get you out of here."

He slowly walked over, the kid was still hesitant, but they could most likely walk if they wanted to, Tommy just needed to coax them into getting out. The other occupant of the room was, to Tommy's surprise, soundly sleeping. He gently scooped up the blanketed baby who only seemed to be a few months old at most. When he turned to look for the other kid, he was surprised to see them a few feet behind him, "Hey! That's my little brother, don't hurt him!"

Tommy didn't make any moves towards the young child, "I would never, but you two have to leave if you guys don't want to get hurt from all the fumes."

"What fumes?" the kid was less accusatory, more scared as his eyes widened when Tommy gestured towards the outside of their room.

"Now come with me, your mother's already out and safe, an ambulance should be here soon."

He begrudgingly nodded and followed Tommy out of his room, sticking surprisingly close so that Tommy ended up curling a wing around him to try and lessen any smoke inhalation. When they exited, he was relieved to see the stranger he'd called over was calming talking to the woman who was occasionally responding, she was still awake though which was a positive. Upon seeing his mother, the little boy ran from beside him and clung to her side, she reacted with a smile and a slight wince of pain, "just be careful there bud, mummy's hurt her leg."

He frowned, "are you gonna be ok?"

She nodded and looked up at Tommy, "thanks to him I will be."

Tommy smiled under his mask, crouching down and gently passing her the somehow still sleeping child (Tommy had checked they were still breathing- they were).

He glanced at the view of the neighbouring buildings and roads that were visible from the side of the apartment complex as sirens started to become audible. He looked over the four people on the floor, the guy in the pink shirt made eye contact with him through Tommy's visor, "I'll stay with them if you need to leave."

Tommy nodded, taking a few steps then vaulting over the side of the railing and into the open air. He glided down for a few metres before adjusting himself and flying upwards to above the apartment's roof.

“Is everything sorted here now?” he asked his communicator.

“All services contacted are in close proximity, all three should be here in less than 5 minutes, you should be fine to leave the area. No heroes were contacted and no patrol routes align with your current position.”

“Rodger that Big T.”

“Get back safely big man.”

“I always do.”

Tommy landed soundlessly on their shared apartment’s balcony, sliding the door open before locking it after him.

Normally he’d call out to his roommates, but Michael was most likely sleeping and he didn’t want to wake the small child. He instead walked into their shared gadgets room, “Eyup.”

Both Ranboo and Tubbo looked up at him immediately, almost in sync, “that was mildly disturbing,” Tommy commented.

Tubbo snickered and looked over to Ranboo who just shrugged, Tommy himself had just opted to ignore their weirdness and start packing away the various gadgets held on his person. The discs were neatly stored and packed away in their respective box while he deactivated the visor on his headpiece and put it in its own little box.

“I’m gonna head to bed early tonight,” Tommy announced after looking at the clock that read ‘11:00 pm’.

“I’m finishing this commission first then I’ll go to bed,” Tubbo added, glancing over to Ranboo, “I’m still sorting out the info I picked up today about vigilantes, I’ll let you guys know the full details tomorrow when it’s done.”

Tommy nodded at Ranboo, he knew if it was urgent Ranboo would’ve skipped the organisation and told him prior to him leaving for the night but Ranboo hadn’t. He wouldn’t press the hybrid, it’s not like the trio were planning anything major at the current moment anyway. Looking back over to Tubbo Tommy asked, “what’s the commission this time?”

“Just a basic information dump of gangs in district 3. Someone from the Manifold Estate organisation, the one that operates the subbranches like Manifold Estate hotel and their recent perfume subbranch that started late February *and is somehow doing well* requested it. I have no clue why.”

“That’s weird, wonder if it was because of that street race a few weeks back,” Tommy shrugged but didn’t ask more.

“Potentially, they also operate in the same district as Las Nevadas, maybe they’re worried that the casino’s bringing wronguns to their business.”

“I don’t know Big T, sounds sus,” Tommy laughed.

“You think everything is sus.”

“Ah, you seem to have found a flaw in my perfect argument, guess it is my time to leave.”

Tubbo rolled his eyes, “goodnight, Tommy.”

“Goodnight Tubster and Ranboob.”

“Y’know I was going to say goodnight to you but after that, I don’t think I will,” Ranboo added.

Tommy faux gasped, “how could you.”

It was Ranboo’s turn to roll his eyes, “goodnight, Tommy.”

Tommy gave a two-fingered salute before heading to their shared bedroom. He easily spotted Michael already asleep in the darkness and not wanting to wake them, didn’t bother to turn the lights on as he walked into the bathroom and changed into his sleepwear. Only giving himself a wipe over with a damp cloth, he didn’t want to shower tonight, it’d mean he’d either have to put his wings away or take forever. Both options weren’t all that appealing at the current minute, he’d just have to shower in the morning, he didn’t have work tomorrow anyway.

He flopped onto the pop-out couch, but sleep did not greet him as he stared at the ceiling, he could still feel the faint trances of adrenaline keeping him alert instead of allowing him to drift off. Images of tonight played in his head, the thick cloud of smoke and the woman lying on the floor but asking for the safety of her children over her own.

He idly wondered if that was what family was, protecting those you cared about over yourself. In that case, he’d consider himself chosen family with Tubbo and Ranboo, but their bond felt different, not like the mother’s. It was more like how the child he helped out of the building didn’t want to see any harm befall his younger sleeping brother. So maybe their trio were like siblings, but those children seemed lost without their mother, like something was missing. Was something missing from Tommy’s own life? No... he was fine as is. Tubbo and Ranboo were all he ever needed.

...

He’d be lying if he said he’d never considered what it’d be like to have a parental figure though, being able to just *be*. Without any life-threatening decisions placed on his shoulders, or any of his roommate’s shoulders. For once he wondered why the world had been so cruel to have left him alone. Yeah, sure he didn’t remember what it was like to have parents and when he had been placed on the streets after what he could only assume was running from an orphanage, he’d not thought twice about its implications. Only taking it as fact, something that happened that he couldn’t change. Now he wondered simply *why* things were the way they were.

Maybe he should’ve taken up Puffy’s offer.

He would’ve been able to see Tubbo still and potentially Ranboo but most of all, he would’ve had a mother. He would’ve been able to get all the motherly love he could possibly hope for.

It was foolish to think about. He didn’t deserve that kind of love, that kind of happy ending.

Not when he'd caused the final page of many stories to be turned. Lives lost from his doing. That wasn't something the world could forgive.

Tommy shouldn't be the one to decide who lives or dies, even if he deems their crimes severe enough. He was only a 16-year-old, soon to be 17-year-old boy with too many scars for his age, both mental and physical. He'd seen many suffer before him, whether it was from the actions of a wanted man or his own actions. Even criminals have stories after all, but here Tommy was deciding on the outcome of their final chapter.

Only recently another had fallen from his doing, when he'd last seen the Blade in fact. On the 19th of March, exactly 19 days ago too. Granted the Blade hadn't done anything to help the fatally injured man, but Tommy had been the one to strike them down. Hence the now dual deactivated safe mode that required both input from Tommy and whoever was at the computer, so most likely Tubbo. He trusted Tubbo would be able to talk him down from anything stupid he might try or downright refuse his request. Tommy wasn't exactly a fan of the sick sense of satisfaction he got from striking down someone he considered too far gone. Sometimes he wondered if, in their eyes, he was the real predator. Toying with his food before he decided they were unredeemable.

He hoped not.

Tommy wanted to be a protector, not someone who should be feared by the community he watches over.

A *ding* interrupted his spiralling thoughts, he blinked his eyes back into focus and glanced over at his upturned phone screen that was partially illuminating the room. He opted to check it; it wasn't like he was going to greet sleep anytime soon.

Mum (Confirmed Badass)

Mum at 11:32pm:

I think Dream got too attached

[Video Attached]

It was a video from Puffy.

He clicked on it and watched as his phone's screen was taken up by the view of what he assumed was Puffy's backyard from the few times he'd seen it when he was younger. An injured brunette sat on the patio with his arm in a sling and leg securely wrapped, a single crutch rested next to them. Despite the man's injuries he was smiling, watching what appeared to be the main subject of the video.

Dream was running around the backyard, two little dogs Tommy recognised were chasing him as Dream threw toys and played with the dogs. They barked enthusiastically, their tails wagging happily as they ran around the backyard after toys or Dream himself. Puffy's voice could be heard laughing over the top of Dream's "come get me you little rascals" or "fetch!", Tommy softly smiled but it was weakened by his previous thoughts.

Was this what he was missing?

Chapter End Notes

Techno: Ranboo seems to be comfortable with this person, maybe I should bring them back here.

Tommy: *Is yelling at Wilbur.*

Techno: Yes, a perfect idea.

Heyyy guys.. sorry for the wait on this one. My schedule may have shit itself a little there <3

Hopefully, it gets its act together and the next chapter will be on time.

Also, someone brought the idea of having a discord server so I decided why not?

(Hopefully, everything's working)

If you feel like joining here's the URL: <https://discord.gg/vZpYBJ998K>

Or click [here](#)

And yes, this will mean that I'll set a 'should be done by date' and you can start poking me if it's not.

Chapter 18: Birthday Boy

Chapter Summary

Tommy gets a little surprise from his roommates :)

or

“Tubbo, we do not gaslight in this here household,” Tommy reminded.

“Aw, but how am I supposed to gaslight, gatekeep, girlboss.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tubbo and Ranboo had been acting weird the last few days, they'd spent the weekend doing *Philza* knows what. Whenever he'd asked where they were going, he either got a completely irrelevant answer or something dismissive. He wasn't sure which of the two he disliked more but what he did know was that he wasn't happy being left in the dark about their going-ons. Now usually Tommy wasn't a nosy guy, but it'd been a good two days of secretive activities and Tommy wanted to get to the bottom of it. Which is why on Monday morning, before he had to get ready for work, he got himself out of bed, intending to finally catch his roommates in the act of- *whatever they were doing*. What he didn't expect was to wake up in a room all alone, no Tubbo, no Ranboo and no Michael.

He couldn't help his knee-jerk reaction to immediately panic, eyes narrowing and searching the room for any sign of struggle or clues for his roommate's whereabouts. That's the only reason he noticed the bright pink sticky note on the back of the door as fast as he did.

In neat writing that could only belong to Ranboo and not some random kidnapper, it read, *'Tubbo wanted to hit the town early today and Michael was up already. I got called in early for work. We'll see you later :)'*.

His feathers settled slightly as he forced himself to relax, *they're fine*.

He wondered what was with the new sense of sudden alertness though, maybe it was linked with the weird bird noises he occasionally made at Michael. Normally his rational mind won out before he panicked as it did in his vigilante activities, but his panic felt more irrational whenever people he cared about were involved.

Maybe Phil would know why his brain was acting strange, the man was an avian too. He shook the thought out of his mind as soon as it came, he didn't know the guy, while he thought Philza was *really fucking pog* he also wasn't especially keen to share his avian abilities with the literal hero assigned to hunt down Rioteer, aka him.

He glanced at his clock; it was 4:20.

He supposed he'd start getting ready for work.

As he arrived at work, 15 minutes early due to his early rising, he was surprised to see Jess setting up the tables and chairs.

“Is Puffy away today?” Tommy asked entering through the unlocked front door instead of the back door, *Puffy hadn’t told him that she’d be away today.*

Puffy exited from the storeroom carrying a bag of coffee beans, she caught his confused gaze and smiled.

“Hey Tommy, you’re here early.”

“Are we going to be extra busy today? I didn’t know there were any events on today.”

“There’s not, at least not any public events, you’re just not working today.”

“Wait what, why?”

“Just wait here for Wil to get here, he’ll explain everything.”

With a bewildered glance at Jess who also shrugged but seemed to be fighting off a smile, he walked over to one of the tables and pulled the chairs off the table. Setting his bag down to the side he idly looked around the store before sitting down, unsure of what to do.

“He won’t be long Tommy,” Puffy added before heading back into the backroom.

True to her word Wilbur arrived at the front door of the café only 5 minutes later, he seemed positively delighted to see Tommy already there waiting for him.

“Hey Toms,” Wilbur grinned as he entered, stopping at Tommy’s table.

“What’s going on?”

“It’s a surprise, c’mom,” Wilbur made a *follow-me* gesture.

Tommy was hesitant to follow but maybe whatever his roommates were up to they’d somehow dragged Wilbur into it; therefore, he could potentially get some answers. So, he reluctantly picked up his bag and looked at Wilbur, “alright big man, where are we heading?”

“That’s the spirit,” Wilbur laughed and linked an arm with his.

Tommy couldn’t help the shudder that ran down his arm as he pulled it back, pretending to not have seen the flash of hurt in Wilbur’s eyes before it was covered up.

“Sorry, you startled me,” Tommy mumbled before hoisting his bag onto his shoulders, “we going?”

“Of course, of course,” Wilbur rushed before quietening his voice, “sorry about that.”

Tommy smiled softly, shrugging his shoulders, “’s fine, Wilby.”

The same infectious smile that Wilbur often wore returned to his face and Tommy couldn’t help but return it, “let’s go then,” Wilbur nodded, as if reaffirming his statement with himself more than Tommy.

“Later Puffy,” Wilbur waved, followed by Tommy’s more subtle wave to both Puffy and Jess.

“Seriously do you actually have a plan on where we’re going or are you just aimlessly wandering around?”

“We’re nearly there I promise, you should’ve just let me get us a driver.”

“I saw what you pulled up in the other day, there’s no way I’m stepping in something worth more than me,” Tommy argued before adding, “and I know I’m pretty damn impressive, so it’s got to up my worth somewhere.”

“What?” Wilbur paused and looked over to Tommy, “lives are priceless Tommy, *you’re* priceless Tommy, there’s not anything worth more than that.”

“What, am I too average for my worth to be counted?”

“Like net worth? Or what? What are you talking about Tommy?”

“Celebrities get numbers over their heads all the time, that’s their worth innit?”

“That’s their net worth Tommy, not their worth as a person, people don’t have those, everyone’s worth it.”

“You just said worth too many times, it doesn’t make sense anymore.”

Wilbur sighed, “I just- *people*, which would thereby include you, are priceless.”

“Then why do we have a minimum wage?”

“Tommy!”

“Can you close your eyes the rest of the way? We’re almost there.”

“And crash into everything? No thanks.”

“Hold my hand then?” Wilbur questioned, holding his hand out to Tommy.

Tommy looked conflicted before slowly placing his hand in Wilbur’s but not before commenting, “bit sus.”

Wilbur gave Tommy a look that seemed to say, *really?*

Tommy grinned, poked his tongue out then closed his eyes.

“This better be fucking cool for all this lead-up and refusal to answer my questions.”

It was a few minutes before Tommy began to pick up information on where Wilbur planned to take him, a few sounds of doors opening and idle chatter made him think he was in some kind of restaurant. They seemed to be approaching what Tommy could only assume was either a table or a booth, the muttered chatter ceased as Wilbur stopped in front of the table.

“You can open your eyes now,” Wilbur announced, letting go of his hand.

Tommy opened his eyes, blinking at the sudden change of light before taking in his scenery. In front of him was a corner booth covered in colourful decorations, a ‘happy birthday’ banner hung over it. At the booth were none other than his roommates, all three sitting there looking up at him in delight, Tommy wasn’t even sure when the last time Ranboo took a day off was.

“Happy Birthday!” they cheered along with Wilbur.

Tommy’s first reaction was a warm feeling enveloping his chest as he smiled back at his roommates and Wil, his second more delayed reaction was, “wait that’s today?”

“You’re an idiot,” Tubbo stated at the same time Ranboo wondered, “how do you forget that?”

“I dunno, I knew it was soon I just forgot what day I picked and I also forgot what day it was, hell most days I have no idea what day it is,” Tommy shrugged.

Tubbo just rolled his eyes and pet the cushioned seat next to him while Ranboo bounced Michael on his knee.

“You up for a taste testing session?” Tubbo grinned, with one of those looks that gave off positively chaotic vibes, Tommy could only return the enthusiasm.

“Wait what kind of food does this place even sell anyways?” Tommy asked, trying to twist around from his seat to glance at the register.

“Ice cream,” Ranboo answered easily.

“You had me at hello,” Tommy replied, glancing over at the other side of the table where Wilbur, Ranboo and Michael were sitting before glancing back at Tubbo.

“Wanna prove we can taste more flavours in an hour?”

“Why that sounds like a *lovely idea*,” Tubbo grinned back while Ranboo paled, “it does *not* sound like a good idea.”

“Aw c’mon Boo, you wouldn’t want to ruin Tommy’s birthday now, would you?”

“Are you gaslighting me?”

“Maybe.”

“Tubbo, we do not gaslight in this here household,” Tommy reminded.

“Aw, but how am I supposed to gaslight, gatekeep, girlboss.”

“You’re not,” Ranboo supplied, giving Tubbo a deadpanned stare while Michael had started drawing with crayons that had been left at the table by the employees.

“How do you three- *four*, functionally live together?” Wilbur commented.

“Was that rhetorical or-,” Ranboo started at the same time both Tubbo and Tommy replied with, “we don’t.”

“Why do you think Tommy’s banned from the kitchen?” Tubbo added.

“Hey, that was one time!”

“You made fucking *water* explode, I don’t even want to know what kind of cooking shit you put in that to make *that* happen.”

“I have no idea, to be honest.”

“Neither do I and I literally am a chemistry student.”

“You study chemistry?” Wilbur inquired, interrupting their back and forth.

“Oh, uh-, kind-of, I take part-time Uni courses for it and do workshops, so I guess?” Tubbo answered, shrugging.

“I have a friend that is really into that kind of stuff, he works at the HA too, I’m sure if there’s ever a ‘bring your kid to work day’ Puffy could smuggle you in to check out the chemistry lab if that’s something you’re interested in.”

“I don’t think a highly secure association that holds government secrets would just freely do a ‘bring your kid to work day’,” Tubbo voiced, which Tommy nodded along with.

“You’d be surprised, lots of weird shit can happen if enough people agree on things, that’s how we got a room full of solely bean bags.”

“That sounds like an experience,” Ranboo warily added, concerned on who the ‘enough people’ were and why they wanted a bag filled with just bean bags.

“Oh, you work at HQ too, don’t you?” Wilbur grinned, “I’m sure Techno would be willing to let his *precious intern* do his own thing for a bit.”

“I don’t know if you’re patronising me,” Ranboo laughed awkwardly.

“No, no, personally I think you’re great at your job, it’s just amusing how much Techno talks about you.”

“Positively or negatively?”

“All positive, I think he wanted to ask the higher-ups to officially appoint you as his secretary or intern or something else of the sort, I forget what his exact words were,” Wilbur shrugged nonchalantly as if he hadn’t just dropped a bombshell on Ranboo.

“I think you just broke him,” Tommy deadpanned at Wilbur as he took in Ranboo’s unmoving form.

“Whoops.”

“Have you tried this one yet Tubbo? It’s fucking bussing,” Tommy grinned as he ate yet another scoop of the same ice cream.

“Oh, I haven’t yet, pass me some,” Tubbo took one of his bowls and slid it towards Tommy, “try this one, I heard they put pepper in it.”

“What the fuck does ‘bussing’ even mean,” Wilbur asked, turning to Ranboo who just shrugged, “no idea, I just roll with it.”

“J=44! !J →!” (Bussing!) Michael added as he took another bite of his ice-cream cone, making

even more of a mess on his face which Ranboo dutifully wiped off before it could get everywhere.

“Yeah Michael, I like the way you think,” Tommy overdramatically nodded at the toddler who giggled at Tommy’s response.

“How many have you tried Ranboo?” Tubbo laughed as the ender-hybrid sighed, “four.”

“*Four?*” Tommy practically squawked, getting an elbow to side for his volume, “*how?* We’ve been here for like *30 minutes*.”

“Tommy eating 13 different flavours of ice cream in that time frame is not normal,” Ranboo defended while Wilbur almost choked on his drink, “*fucking what, 13??*”

Tommy laughed at Wilbur, “I bet you’ve only tried like 2.”

“*Yeah, I have only tried like 2, Tommy, I’m not fucking weird.*”

Tubbo snickered beside Tommy, “*plebs.*”

“Thanks for agreeing to come along today, Wilbur,” Ranboo smiled, holding a Michael who was currently using his shoulder as a pillow as a result of their sugar crash.

The trio, minus Michael who was asleep, watched the pair in front of them mucking around as they walked on the footpath next to the main road, the sun slowly lowering itself closer to the horizon. Wilbur had agreed to tag along with their little group as they went to the park after ice cream. That led to Tommy once again managing to somehow piss off the local geese and what turned into a peaceful outing became an amusing show for the rest of their group as Tommy sprinted around the park. Ranboo was honestly impressed that the geese kept up their pursuit for so long.

After that affair, Tommy had taken to staying in trees for the rest of the day, granted Tubbo did enthusiastically join him and the pair talked about whatever random thing they could think of for what felt like hours. Occasionally yelling out to either him or Wilbur to back up a point one had or to provide an opinion on something. It’s how Ranboo learnt that Wilbur liked eating sand, and suddenly Tommy and Wilbur’s friendship made a lot more sense.

“I’m happy I could come along, thank you for inviting me out with you guys.”

“It was the least we could do, Tommy’s spoken about you quite a bit.”

“All positive I hope?”

Ranboo laughed, “yeah, he considers you a very close friend.”

Wilbur smiled softly, “the kid’s helped me realise a lot of things about myself.”

“He tends to do that to people.”

“He also worries me,” Wilbur paused, sparing a glance at Tubbo, then to Ranboo, “hell, I thought his home life wasn’t too great.”

Ranboo didn’t tense at his words, surprising himself at how easily he answered, “we try our best, this is better than we all had before, each other is enough for us.”

Wilbur nodded, “I can see that now, I’m glad he has such supportive people in his life.”

Ranboo smiled, gazing fondly at the pair in front of him, “I’m just happy he’s made such great friends.”

Tommy sat at the kitchen stool watching as Ranboo cooked something or other, *he wouldn’t say what it was*. Which seemed to be a theme today. Michael was asleep in their bed and Tubbo was trying *and failing* to conceal the fact he was decorating a birthday cake.

“Tubbo did you buy anything for tomorrow’s dinner?” Ranboo asked between tending to the two pots on the stove.

“Uhh-”

“So, I’m guessing that’s a no?”

“Whoops.”

“Is this the real reason you always make me and Ranboo do it?” Tommy commented from his spot at the counter.

“Hey, I don’t *usually* forget things,” Tubbo countered, “Besides, it’s *fineee*, I’ll just go again on Wednesday, we can eat leftovers tomorrow.”

Ranboo turned and looked at Tommy, mouthing ‘*we should take him off the grocery roster*’, to which Tommy aggressively nodded in agreement.

He had half the mind to comment that Tubbo usually took himself off it anyway but decided against it.

A timer interrupted any further silent conversation between Ranboo and himself as the ender-hybrid turned back to the stove and turned one of the pots down to a low simmer.

“How are you going Tubbo? I’m done here, I’ve just got to strain it.”

Tubbo turned back to Ranboo, icing coating one of his hands as if the piping bag had exploded upon use. Upon further inspection, it seemed that was exactly what had happened.

“For the love of-” Ranboo sucked in a breath before he could finish his sentence and sighed, “*of course*, you know what? I don’t even know why I’m surprised.”

Tommy laughed as Tubbo tried to cover up his mess, “I can cook I swear.”

“Uh-huh, sure,” Ranboo nodded indifferently, grabbing one of the kitchen rags to start cleaning the icing off both Tubbo and the countertop.

“I feel like if you had Michael here, they’d show you up,” Tommy commented between laughing fits while Tubbo just mumbled incoherently.

Tubbo stuck his tongue out at Tommy as he wiped icing off his hands in the sink revealing the full extent of the icing bomb that’d gone off where he was working making Tommy only laugh more.

“I will punt you,” Tubbo grumbled.

“What happened to being nice to me today, it is my *birthday*, after all, you wouldn’t be mean to the birthday boy now would you?”

“I would if the *birthday boy* was being an asshole.”

“Maybe let’s not,” Ranboo butted in before their play argument could result in one chasing the other around the apartment.

After Ranboo had cleaned the countertop and Tubbo had successfully removed any remaining icing from himself, Ranboo went back to the stove and took one of the pots, pouring it through a strainer. The boiling water created a puff of steam as it was tipped into the sink, revealing its contents as bowtie pasta.

“Aw yeah, big man pasta,” Tommy cheered, “I’ve never seen such refined pasta, you truly are magic Ranboo.”

Ranboo just quietly chuckled as he divided the pasta between three bowls before adding the pasta sauce.

Tubbo went to continue with decorating before Ranboo stopped him, “we can do that later, come eat dinner while it’s hot.”

Tubbo grumbled something in return but did collect a bowl and take a seat next to Tommy. Ranboo rolled his eyes though his face betrayed a fond smile at his roommate. Ranboo grabbed the two remaining bowls and placed one in front of Tommy, taking the other seat next to Tommy.

Tubbo didn’t wait to start eating and neither did Tommy after being given his food, Ranboo only sighed before doing the same.

After the trio had finished their dinner and packed away their bowls and cutlery into the dishwasher Tubbo ushered Tommy over to the couch as Ranboo started to refill piping bags in the kitchen. When Tommy had taken a seat on the couch in front of the TV Tubbo had hurried down the hallway before returning with his laptop. Tommy sent a confused glance at Ranboo who only grinned in return, damn they were both in on something.

Tubbo ignored Tommy’s silent exchange with Ranboo that proved to be getting nowhere in favour of connecting his laptop to the TV, which suitably recaptured Tommy’s attention. On the screen was a paused video file which Tubbo promptly hit play on before retreating to the kitchen to help out.

The video loaded for a second before playing, the screen filling with an image of Tubbo at his work desk. The video Tubbo tapped a pen against the desk before looking at the camera, a grin splitting his face.

“So, you’re probably wondering what the fuck we’ve been up to recently, well, here’s your answer.”

The screen went black before Michael appeared on the screen.

“T. *ĀS!J/ / || J= - =J: : ȐS/ / / - JL· S/ / R ȐL· / / - ȐJ / / R T. J · JL; || J=’ : L· ȐL· T. T. L:’ : T. *ĀS!J/ J= - JL | L· JL:’ : : SȐ,*” (Thank you for saving me and being so kind to me, you’re better than mummy ever was.) Michael smiled at the camera, “*ĀS!J/ / ȐS / : T. ĀR S/ |, S/ / - JL:’*” (Happy Birthday, Angel!)*

Michael waved at the camera, Ranboo’s voice could be briefly heard before the screen went black again, “you did a great job, Michael.”

Tommy smiled softly at the screen, vaguely aware of one of his roommates entering the hallway while the other began to redecorate the cake.

This time the screen changed to a video of Wilbur in his house, Wilbur was clearly holding the camera as he waved it around before settling it to himself.

“Happy birthday, gremlin child!”

A distant voice called, *“who are you calling, Wil?”*

“I’m recording something for Tommy, wanna say happy birthday?”

Wilbur shifted the camera over to where Phil and Techno were sitting on the couch, Techno looking up from reading a book and Phil putting down his puzzle book.

“Happy birthday, mate,” Phil waved cheerfully at the camera.

Techno turned to the camera, *“you can keep Wilbur if you want.”*

“Hey!” Wilbur complained, *“stop trying to get rid of me!”*

Tommy laughed at Techno’s statement.

Techno snorted and shrugged innocently, *“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”*

A hand that Tommy could only assume was Wilbur’s appeared in frame as he flipped off Techno who in return put his book down while Wilbur readjusted the camera to himself. A startled screech came from the screen as Wilbur started running from what Tommy could only assume was Techno.

“Happy birthday, Toms!” Wilbur managed to say between frantically running around.

From the corner of his eye, Tommy watched as Ranboo led an excited Michael into the kitchen.

The video cut to black again, before changing to a view of Puffy’s backyard, the brunette was nowhere to be seen but Dream was still getting chased around by two fluffy little dogs.

“Say happy birthday to Tommy!” Puffy called out to her son.

“Happy Birthday Tommy! Can’t wait to hear back from you!”

The camera view switched to Puffy’s face, catching her rolling her eyes at Dream.

“Don’t worry about him, he’s an idiot.”

“Hey!” Dream protested, obviously having heard her comment.

Puffy ignored him, “*make your own choices kid, you’ve come this far after all,*” Puffy paused.

“*I’m proud of you, Tommy, you’ve done such an amazing job. I never could’ve guessed that the boy I found all those years ago would be such a social magnet for making friends with everyone he meets. You’re larger-than-life Tommy, never forget that.*”

“*Happy Birthday, kiddo.*”

The screen cut to black again, this time when the screen filled with the image of his workplace more background noise was audible. At the counter was Wally, smiling at the camera, “*Happy birthday, Tommy! Don’t tell Matt but you’re still my favourite guy to work with.*”

The video caught Tubbo’s laugh (who appeared to be the cameraman) before it cut to black again, this time showing Jess who was sitting in the back room of the store.

“*Happy birthday Tom, that Wilbur guy’s still fucking weird man- you’ve got a strange friend group.*”

The screen changed to one outside of the store, Niki’s van parked in front of the camera.

“*Hey, Puffy!*” Niki smiled as she got out of the van, “*what’s with the phone?*”

“*It’s Tommy’s birthday on Monday, wanna send him a happy birthday message?*”

“*Of course,*” Niki paused from where she was opening the back of the van, “*Happy birthday, Tommy, I hope you have a great day, I’ll see you on Tuesday!*”

The screen cut to black again, the next person appearing on the screen causing Tommy to look over at his roommates in shock. Tubbo looked at him with a grin, keeping silent as Tommy directed his attention back to the screen.

There in full workshop attire was Charlie, aka, Slimecicle, a highly regarded support gear creator.

“*Heya Tomathy Big Man Innit, a little birdie told me it was your birthday today, so I thought I oughta say happy birthday. Thanks for your premium, ‘best biggest man’ title, I proudly display it,*” Charlie changed the camera angle to his desk where a little plaque stand read ‘*best biggest man*’.

“*Have a great birthday big man, and remember, my offer still stands if you ever need it.*”

“How the fuck-” Tommy started before getting shushed by Tubbo as another video started playing.

Schlatt sat in a neatly organised office in the centre of the shot, “*heya, Tommy.*”

“I hope you all have been doing well. I’ll be sure to give you your gift next time I see you. Hopefully, that will be sooner rather than later, but work’s been a pain recently, so fingers crossed.”

Schlatt crossed his fingers in frame before smiling at the camera, “*Happy birthday, Tommy.*”

The next video was louder than Schlatt’s, with plenty of lively background noise to be heard as Quackity appeared in frame. He was standing a little way off from the main area of his casino, obviously trying to get a quieter spot to film in.

“Hola Amigo, got word it was someone’s birthday, so expect something from me the next time we meet.”

“*Happy birthday!*”

“That sounded mildly like a threat,” Tommy commented, gaining a quiet laugh from Ranboo who was giving one of the piping bags to Michael.

The video faded to black again and this time the setting was one Tommy was far more familiar with, it was their gadgets room. It was clear Tubbo was the one setting up the camera as Ranboo watched on from his chair in the centre of the video. He lightly bounced Michael on his knee as Tubbo shifted the camera into a better position before a thumbs-up came into frame.

“*Uh, hi Tommy.*”

“*I’ve never really been the best at conveying what I mean to say so just bear with me, alright?*”

“First of all, I just wanted to thank you. You’ve definitely brought a lot of unexpectedness into my life. Which for the most part has seemed to be for the better and while at times I may be clueless on the way you approach things you somehow still manage to overcome any challenge thrown at you. Maybe provided Tubbo’s helping.”

Video Ranboo’s comment gained a laugh from both video Tubbo and present Tubbo.

“But what I really meant is that you’ve taught me a lot, some of it more useful than others- like I don’t think I needed to know how to pickpocket but it’s a skill nonetheless I suppose.”

“*Thank you though, I’m happy to call you my friend.*”

Tommy smiled as the video faded, “you’re not half bad yourself, Ranboo.”

Gaining an ‘aw’ from Tubbo and a laugh from the ender hybrid.

The next person that appeared on the screen was Tubbo himself, sitting in his desk’s chair with numerous unfinished gadgets scattered around in frame.

“Sup Big man, thought I’d keep this one short after all that, don’t know how good your attention span is after all.”

“Hey!” Tommy side-eyed Tubbo accusingly, “it’s not that bad.”

Tubbo replied back with a convincing “sure.”

Tommy rolled his eyes and kept watching the screen.

“Y’know, never could I have guessed that some random kid would have helped me out that day, let alone become my eventual roommate and best friend. Maybe if mini me knew that they’d be less afraid when they got cornered by those street kids.”

“It’s funny like that though, I just kept seeing you around after that day, turns out Puffy knows a fucking ton of people. I’m happy one of those people was you.”

“I don’t regret the day when Puffy and Schlatt organised us to live together, it was probably the best thing my father’s ever done for me. Tommy, you’re one of the most important people in my life, I think this apartment would be a lot less lively if you weren’t here.”

“So, I wanted to thank you, for saving me, for bringing Ranboo into my life, for bringing Michael into my life...and for staying with me. I couldn’t have asked for anyone more perfect to me than you are. So, thank you, for being you.”

Happy Birthday, Big T.”

Tommy quietly wiped his eyes before getting off the couch and walking over to the kitchen. Ranboo was by the looks of it finishing the cake’s decorations off with the help of Michael and Tubbo had, upon seeing Tommy’s approach, put his equipment down.

Tubbo opened his arms and Tommy gave a soft laugh before embracing his roommate.

“You’ve gone soft,” Tubbo teased, as he shamelessly tucked his head against Tommy’s chest.

“Shut up,” Tommy grumbled, holding him just a little tighter.

Ranboo chuckled as he watched the pair, intending to turn away and continue working with Michael before getting a look from Tommy.

“C’mere,” Tommy held an arm out, welcoming them into their hug.

Ranboo wordlessly obliged, picking up Michael and wrapping an arm around Tommy’s shoulder.

“I love you guys,” Tommy whispered.

“We love you too.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm alive, huzzah.

We should be good now, I'm hoping to not get sick again anytime soon because that *sucked*.

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